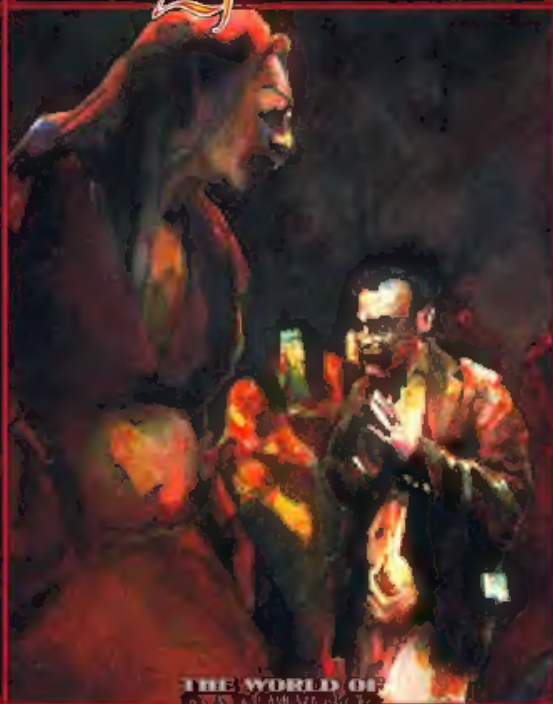


Gypsies



THE WORLD OF
DARKNESS

A World of Darkness:

Gypsies™

The Outsider Within

*A woman drew her long black hair out tight
And fiddled whisper music on those strings
And bats with baby faces in the violet light
Whistled, and beat their wings ...*

— T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*

One group can survive slipping through the cities, riding through the country, and in all the worlds between. One group has appeared at all the turning points in history, playing its quiet, subtle role before slipping off once again. These are the Gypsies, a people never accepted anywhere, yet always found everywhere.

They have a unique story, these special people, and a unique voice to tell it. No group has seen what they have seen. No group has accomplished what they have. And no group can play the role the Gypsies will.

by Teeuwynn

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Word from the White Wolf Game Studio

I have never written a solemn "Word from White Wolf" before, but this case is worth making an exception for. Robert Bloch, author of *Psycho*, *Mysteries of the Worm*, and other seminal works of horror and fantasy, has passed away at the age of 77. White Wolf will publish his last story, "Scent of Vinegar," in its first Dark Destiny anthology, *Dark Destiny: The World of Darkness*.

A World of Darkness:



GYPSTIES™

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Introduction

... people, even today, ten million years later, still say that Gypsies know everything. And it's true. They lived well in those days, and we live even better.

— Lazaros Harisiadis, *Greek Gypsy* (translated by Diane Tong), *Gypsy Folk Tales*

The vampires skulk in the looming shadows of their undying world of politics and pain. The werewolves known as Garou battle desperately, and perhaps hopelessly, to save the world they call Gaia. The mages, and faeries too, work to shape the world for their own devices. But not the Rom, not the Gypsies.

Those of the Blood of Daenna know their place in the World of Darkness. The Gypsies recognize the plotting and battles behind the Masquerade of the vampires, the werewolves' Veil, the mages' intrigues, the Underworld of the wraiths, and even the faerie hills' whispers. Knowledge is both gift and curse to the Rom. Forever isolated from other humans by their Blood and ways, the Rom await with curiosity their role in the upcoming Convergence. Since the first Gypsy walked the earth, individual Romani have played critical roles at important points in history. As the wildcards at the Convergence, the Rom expect to put on a particularly impressive show.

World of Darkness: Gypsies provides full details on generating and playing Gypsy characters. It also gives the history of the Rom and information about the Gyp-

sies' current role in the Gothic-Punk world. While the book itself is written with human Gypsy characters in mind, it also provides useful background information and new Abilities for those players who wish to run Ravnos Kindred or Silent Strider Garou.

By itself this book does not contain enough information to run a campaign world. **Gypsies** should be used in conjunction with one or more Storytelling games such as **Vampire: The Masquerade**, **Werewolf: The Apocalypse**, or **Mage: The Ascension** to add depth to the chronicle.

Theme

The theme of **World of Darkness: Gypsies** is the intimacy of the outsider. Gypsies are castaways, social outcasts in the World of Darkness. They are distrusted, hated, and even persecuted by the other inhabitants of the world. Most folks would probably just prefer to forget they exist at all. Yet, it is this same outcast status that



helps the Gypsies preserve their culture, and even more importantly, provides the Romani with their uniquely penetrating view of the world.

Gypsies can recognize all the forces competing for power in the world, assess all the angles, and thus develop more perceptive insights into the workings of the world. Unlike the other groups tussling for power and supremacy, the Gypsies are far enough removed from the melee to see the patterns of politics, the ebb and flow of conflict. All things become clear from a distance.

Although they may seem marginalized to the world at large, the Gypsies actually understand far more about the World of Darkness than do any of the so-called major players, and this may well prove to be their salvation.

Or their damnation.

Mood

The mood of *World of Darkness: Gypsies* is one of destiny. The Rom are the children of fate, and every member of every *lampionia* of young Rom who goes romping off on tour believes that she will play a key role in the destiny of the world — and she may well be right. Each Gypsy carries within herself the potential for greatness. The knowledge of the world is locked within her veins, within her soul. Unlike the other people who inhabit the world, the Gypsies know they are special.

No matter how much persecution a Gypsy faces, no matter how bad the odds seem, the knowledge of her birthright and the sureness in her destiny keep the Rom from ever giving up, from ever truly losing hope. The brightness of her belief is a beacon in the claustrophobic darkness of the world, and no matter how bleak the present, a Gypsy always has the future — and the past.

Of course, the mood may vary widely from chronicle to chronicle. It is up to the Storyteller to determine what aspects of the Gypsies' reality he wishes to emphasize and which he will let fade into the background. However, the knowledge of the Gypsies' destiny is always present, even in the darkest of chronicles.

Through a Mirror Darkly

The Romani inhabiting the World of Darkness bear a resemblance to the Gypsies of our world, but they are a distinct breed. Much of the persecution inflicted upon them is the same as that inflicted upon the Gypsies of our world. Similarly, the Romany words and general philoso-

phy on life, found within this book, echo the philosophies and language of our world's Gypsies. However, the Gypsies described within this book have stepped through the looking glass and have been transformed in the process. Some parts of their lives have been magnified a thousand fold, while others have been stripped away altogether, or nearly so. Persecution in the World of Darkness is perhaps a bit worse, if that is possible, and the magic that forms the framework of their lives is more than the magic of the road — it is the magic of the Blood.

Prejudice and pain permeate both the World of Darkness and the "real" world. The Gypsies have received more than their fair share of injustice in both. As you read this, the Romani of our world face poverty, ignorance and a new tide of hatred. The Gypsies of our world are no sainted martyrs; many would probably treat the gaje as poorly as they themselves are treated, if they were given the chance. Unfortunately, our world offers countless examples of victims who, in their turn, take up the knife of persecution and wield it as eagerly as did their persecutors before them.

The Rom of our world do not have the advantage of knowing that they are a race protected by fate, as do the Gypsies in the World of Darkness. Instead, they face the daunting task of keeping the remnants of their way of life intact in the face of increasing efforts by hostile or "concerned" governments, who refuse the Gypsies entrance to their countries, or place them in ghettoized communities resembling prisons, or attempt to assimilate the Gypsies into their culture, "for their own good."

There is very little certain about the future of the Gypsies in our world. However, despite all the hardships and persecution, the Gypsies have always retained a sparkling sense of humor, of balance, of life. It takes a courageous and free-thinking people to walk their own path, to take the road less traveled. And the Gypsies have done just that.

Bibliography

The following are good sources of information on the Gypsies of our world and folklore regarding Gypsies and wandering people of all kinds. Most of these books are relatively easy to locate. The journals of the Gypsy Lore Society are harder to find, but give an eclectic and interesting view of Gypsies through the eyes of their gaje chroniclers.

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Romani Lexicon

Romany is a language with literally hundreds of dialects. It is also an oral language: There is no "official" written version of Romany. The words below compose a common argot taken from a variety of different Romany dialects, ranging from Slovak to Brazilian.

Amria — (Ahm-REE-ah) A curse or violent oath.
Angustri — (angh-GOOS-tree) A ring, often magical in nature.

Baba — (BAH-ba) Old woman. A term of respect.
Bater — (BAH-ter) A term meaning "so be it" used to conclude deals or other arrangements.

Baxt — Good luck.
Bujo — (BOO-zhoh) An elaborate swindle to gain something, usually money, from a gaje.

Deltumnimos — (del-TOOHM-nee-mos) Literally, "God's embrace," a magical potion that expands the abilities of the imbiber's mind.

Dhartime — (DAHR-ti-mey) A Gypsy touched by, or "claimed" by the element of earth.

Diklo — (DEEK-loh) A heavy scarf often weighted and used as a weapon.

Dilo — (DEE-loh) A fool or imbecile.
Dook — (Dook) The Sight, or magic in general.

Draba — (DRAH-bah) Amulets and other items of magical power.

Drabarne — (drah-BAR-ney) Gypsy mages skilled at creating *draba*.

Dukkerin — (DOOK-er-in) The art of fortune-telling or the use of the Sight.

Gaje — (GAH-zhey) Any non-Gypsy.
Giorgio — (JOOR-gee-oh) Another term for a non-Gypsy.

Jastima — (ZSHAH-tsee-mah) A Gypsy touched by, or "claimed" by the element of water.

Jhanaki — (ZSHAH-NAH-kee) A Gypsy touched by, or "claimed" by the element of air.

Kumpania — (KOOM-pah-ne-yah) A group of Gypsies who live and travel together, often, but not always, an extended family.

Kumpaniyi — (KOOM-pah-ne-yee) Plural of kumpania.

Kuyan — (KOO-yahn) A Gypsy touched by, or "claimed" by the element of fire.

Marhime — (MAH-ree-mey) Unclean or impure. Any who have defiled their Blood. The opposite of wuzho.

Mule — (MOOH-ley) A ghost or spirit of the dead.

Mule-vi — (MOOH-ley-vee) A medium or an item capable of reaching the world of the dead.

Paramitsha — (pah-rah-MEESH-tah) Gypsy fairy tales.

Patteran — (PAH-tehr-an) The special Blood Affinity of the Phuri Dae, or an important symbol or other piece of information.

Pena — (PEEN-ah) Sister.

Phral — (Frahl) A full-Blooded Gypsy, or true Rom.

Phuri Dae — (FOO-ree Dah-EE) One of the Gypsy families of power. Also any wise woman or woman with magical powers.

Posta — (POH-sta) A sacrifice, usually ritual in nature.

Prala — (PRAH-lah) Brother.

Prikaza — (PREEK-ka-za) Bad luck.

Rom — (Rohm) The Gypsy race or an individual of Gypsy Blood.

Romany — (ROH-mah-nee) The Gypsy language, in all its dialects.

Satarma — (sah-TAHR-ma) Star. Also a Gypsy touched by, or "claimed" by the element of spirit.

Shilmulo — (SHEEL-moo-loh) A vampire. One of the "cold dead."

Talith — (TAH-leth) A Romani weapon consisting of a heavy scarf (*diklo*) weighted and barbed along each end, or the art of using one of these weapons.

Tsurara — (TSOO-rah-rah) The Knife Tribe of Gypsies. One of the newest, and most radical, families of power.

Tumnimos — (TOOM-nee-mos) The vampiric embrace.

Vardo — (VAR-doh) A Romani wagon, camper, RV, etc.

Wuzho — (WOO-zhoh) Pure, untainted. The opposite of marhime.

Zapaderin — (zah-PAH-der-in) A unique, hypnotizing Romani dance form and Blood Affinity.





Chapter One: The History of the Rom

*To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree
of life*

Revelations 2:7, The King James Bible

Come in, little one. Come in. You mustn't scrape at the door as if you were some sort of mongrel pup begging for scraps. You are Rom, and the Blood of the ages flows in your veins.

Ah, I see my vulgarity has startled you. This evening we shall speak of many things far more startling than certain bodily fluids. Tonight you shall learn a great deal more of your heritage than most of our race now know or care to remember. The young too often are distracted by what my great-granddaughter calls "the neon and flash."

and do not look beyond the obvious. But never mind, when it is time we shall each do what we are meant to do. You too, little one.

Bring me that blanket in the far corner... Yes, you have it. Now sit down and I shall truly begin. Are you comfortable? Good. You will not be so for long.

We are an ancient people, and we have many many clans. Our folk have traveled the world. We have witnessed the rise and fall of innumerable civilizations, great and small, yet we have always remained apart. It is our destiny. Our way. The



gaje often accuse us of being mere thieves and con artists, but that is only because they believe one can truly "own" something forever. We know that no one really owns anything; so we simply borrow items for a while.

In recent times, others have tried to get us to settle down and become part of their sedentary culture. Sometimes they coerce, sometimes they use temptation, and often they resort to brute force. This is simply a subtle attempt to destroy us. Hitler and his fellows, and others like them, were more direct. But although they massacred us by the thousands, they could not destroy the Rom.

Why are we so hated, so feared? Why are the gaje so suspicious of us? They certainly have more to fear from their own people than they could ever have to fear from us. It is because they sense our otherness, our power. In the end it is the Blood that makes us what we are — guardians of knowledge.

You wish to interrupt, to question. That is good. But for now you must remain patient and allow an old woman to ramble. If you listen carefully, you will learn much this night, and tomorrow you may return with your questions. It is certain that I have heard them before.

The Phuri Dae, our clan, are the true keepers of knowledge among the Rom. We have honed the magic of our Blood, learning more about both the future and the past than other families. We are the true mages and the lore keepers, although many other families have their fair share of birth.

Did you know our family was named for the woman who was the mother of the Rom? It is so. Her name was Daenna. Even today "Dae" means mother in most dialects of Romany. She was the mother of us all, and it is her story you will now hear.

Daenna was a woman of surpassing beauty, both spiritual and physical. Strong and tall, she had a mind as sharp as the keenest blade. She lived in one of the very first cities ever built, a grand place of shining buildings and laughing people.

One night Daenna met a tall man with eyes as bright as diamonds — and with a mind to match. Soon they became the fastest of friends, and more. Although he could have been with any woman in

the city, Daenna intrigued him most, and so the man, Dracian, showered her parents with the finest silks and spices, and the two became as one.

On the morning of their wedding, Daenna's only brother confronted her, claiming he did not trust the handsome groom who had so easily bought her from the family. Smiling, Daenna folded her young brother, Sarrath, into her arms and held the boy who was still shy of his full growth. Ashamed of his tears and unaccountably angry, Sarrath backed away from his sister. Heated words followed as Sarrath pleaded with Daenna to remain at home. For her part, Daenna asked her brother to be reasonable and to accept her love for Dracian.

Realizing Daenna would not be moved, Sarrath cried out that he could not remain in the house of their parents, or even in the city itself, unless it was with Daenna. "Live with us, then," Daenna challenged, but such a look of fear and rage swept over Sarrath's features that she had to look away. When she turned back, Sarrath was gone. Daenna hoped that Sarrath would soon return, but he did not. Although her family searched for months, they found no sign of Sarrath.

Despite Sarrath's strange outburst, the ceremony of union went on. Dracian took Daenna to his home, a palatial manor of carved stone. On that night, the night of their wedding, Dracian came to Daenna and sat next to her on the silken pillows of the bedchamber. Bending over her scented body, Dracian began whispering secrets into Daenna's ear.

That night, and in the nights to come, Daenna learned much from Dracian. But she did not learn from her husband the one thing she had expected to be taught. Instead Dracian whispered to Daenna of his death and rebirth, for her husband was one of the *shilmulo*, the vampires, some few of whom resided in the city.

In that ancient time, vampires and mortals lived together in peace, unlike in present days. Having learned her beloved's nature, Daenna willingly allowed Dracian to drink of her blood. However, she never drank of his, no matter how many times he offered. Even then, at the start, our people were ever-wary of the potency of the Blood.





Dracian taught Daenna many things, he spoke of the werewolves and the faeries, and of the ghosts of the departed who remain yet near the residents of the living world. He also spoke to her of both magic and science. All these things and more Daenna learned. It is said their arguments and discussions often echoed throughout the manor's marbled corridors from dusk until dawn.

Dracian was especially fascinated with experiments designed to control his physical needs and desires. Then, as today, many vampires attempted to reach a state of peace, a state in which they come to terms with the Beast raging in their very souls. So Dracian searched.

But over many years, Dracian had discovered a way to do something no one else, mortal or immortal, has since been able to duplicate. Through esoteric and intellectual labors we can only guess at, Dracian created a tree.

Do not laugh, little one. This was no ordinary tree he had created, no simple maple or pine, although I challenge you to create even one blade of grass from nothing. I did not mispeak when I said that he created a tree. This tree was the most beautiful, most perfect tree ever created; and one day Dracian showed Daenna the tree.

Standing in the garden, among the arched palms and scented blossoms, Daenna stared up and hard at the small, wizened tree of which Dracian was so proud. Its gnarled branches were adorned with delicate, feathery leaves the color of sea foam shot through with golden veins. The bark was rough, but gave an impression of transparency and delicacy, reminding Daenna of the fragile wings of the dragonfly. The tree was the embodiment of life and knowledge, full in its age and beauty.

Stepping closer, the mother of us all noticed a single, golden fruit that was protected and surrounded by the largest of the leaves, as a mother hugs her newborn child to her nurturing breast. The fruit fairly vibrated, its golden color was so strong and true. Daenna's mouth watered as she gazed longingly at the fruit's juice-ripened perfection.

Instinctively, she reached for the beautiful fruit. With the preternatural swiftness of his kind, Daenna's shilmulo husband caught her hand and whirled Daenna to face him. His alabaster face and diamond eyes held Daenna's gaze as Dracian spoke to her of the Fruit of the Tree of Knowledge.

Even we, the Phuri Dae, know little of what Dracian told Daenna of the wondrous tree. But what we do know I will now impart to you.

Dracian told Daenna that the single fruit now maturing on the tree would soon be powerful enough to grant him surcease from his ever-present thirst for the blood. His body and soul would be forever freed of the powerful hunger of the Beast within. Dracian also spoke of other powers and abilities he might gain upon ingesting the fruit. Unfortunately, we do not know the exact powers Dracian spoke of that night, but we can guess at some of them based on our own experiences as Rom.

Upon hearing this wondrous news, Daenna wept tears of joy and amazement for her husband. Nestling on the ground, wrapped in their cloaks, Dracian and Daenna spent what was left of the evening speaking of the future.

As the first fingers of dawn spilled over the garden wall, Dracian sank into the dank earth below to sleep beside his tree until night and shadow once again laid their claim to the garden. Laying her face against the ground in which her beloved slumbered, Daenna tarried in the coolness of the garden, listening to the splash of water in the fountains and the calling of birds in the trees. It was then she heard the first faint sounds of a struggle. The mingling curses, screams, stinging blows and dull thumps were the harbingers of the destruction of Daenna's peaceful and serene world — and the first birth pangs of a new age.

Our mother did not even have time to enter her household proper before the first blows struck the wooden door leading from her courtyard garden to the road beyond. For a long moment, terror seized Daenna, and she froze, as unable as Dracian to move in that forever instant. Watching in



horrified fascination, Daenna saw cracks begin to form in the door, and her body flinched in sympathy with each blow.

At that moment, or so it is said, the wind shifted ever so slightly, bringing the liquid-sweet scent of the Tree of Knowledge into her awareness. Realizing that no one else must possess the immense power of the tree and its fruit, Daenna carefully plucked the fruit and placed it within a pocket of her flowing skirts. Fetching a still-sputtering torch from the garden wall, Daenna paused but one moment, her eyes sliding involuntarily to the plot of earth under which her immortal husband rested, before setting fire to the Tree of Knowledge. As the delicate branches caught fire, wilting before her eyes, Daenna backed slowly away from the destruction of her husband's work, many lifetimes of toil lost in only a few moments of flame.

Turning and fleeing, Daenna managed to reach the shadows of her home's arched entrance hall before the garden door gave way to the hail of

violent blows. Pressing her way into the kitchens, Daenna searched frantically for somewhere to hide. Already she could hear the voices of strangers, shattering the fragile tranquillity and tapestried privacy of her home.

Moving deeper into the building, Daenna stepped lightly on the cool stones of the corridor's flooring, coming at last to her personal suite of rooms. Shutting and locking her door, our ancestor began gathering a few items to take with her in flight. It was then she saw the animal waiting beside her bed.

As the beating of her heart thundered in her ears, Daenna prepared to fight the huge wolf, which was rising from its great haunches to attack her. The beast's massive jaws and its dark hair, matted with blood, filled Daenna's senses, but she did not turn away.





But, even as it rose to rip out her throat, the thing changed. Limbs flowing like butter on a skillet, the beast became at the same time something more and something less: a human.

Gasping in shock, Daenna stared at the large man now facing her, tears she had never thought to see rolling down his whiskered jowls. For here standing before her, was Daenna's own brother Sarrath. Sarrath had disappeared over a decade earlier, but there was no mistaking his identity.

Long moments passed as Sarrath quickly told Daenna a tale of discovery, denial, terror, and hard-won acceptance of his heritage. Daenna could spare little time for questions as the sounds of the search grew ever-nearer to the reunited siblings. But she could not help but ask two things of Sarrath. How had he found her? And why was he standing here now?

Moving so close to Daenna that her senses were filled with his harsh, musky odor, Sarrath quietly explained how he had searched for her in

the streets of the Ivory City. Over the course of time he found her, but did not wish to approach the wife of a shilmulo, for vampires and werewolves were already warring with one another. By this time, werewolves were being killed with impunity by the shilmulo masters of the city. Sarrath wanted to spare Daenna the anguish of either he or Dracian dying at the hands of the other.

In response to his sister's second question, Sarrath told of how he had become friends with certain soldiers in the employ of Amriat, powerful vampire. Amriat knew that the city would soon collapse into chaos and that Dracian was near to achieving his goal of creating a unique fruit that would give any vampire heretofore undreamt power. So Amriat instructed his soldiers to attack at dawn of this day. Knowing that Daenna would be attacked and then murdered by the soldiers, Sarrath had decided that he must come to her aid.

As Sarrath poured forth his brief story, the memories of their shared childhood came flooding back to Daenna. Sarrath was family and she must trust him. Nothing mattered more than that simple fact. Thus decided, Daenna led her brother to a secret ladder which emptied into the under-city on which their own Ivory City was built. The two barely avoided capture.

Sarrath led Daenna to the dwelling of their distant cousins, where he had stayed when he first returned to the city. Kindred to the werewolves, and some themselves Garou, they would grant the hunted siblings refuge until the furor died out.

Thus Daenna and Sarrath arrived at the small, mud-brick home of their cousins, where they spent the night. Collapsing in exhaustion, the two slept together by the meager fire, back to back as is proper. Daenna fell asleep listening to her brother's soft breathing, an odd sound to one used to laying her head against her shilmulo beloved's silent chest.

Unfortunately for Daenna and Sarrath, it was not yet dawn when the demanding shouts of soldiers aroused the entire household. Furious with his soldiers' inability to find anything but the blackened remains of the tree, Amriat had ordered a house-by-house search. Ah! Such evil! It is no wonder amria now means curse in our language, for Amriat was surely a curse upon our mother.

As many unfortunates soon discovered, soldiers stood at the city gates, attempting to keep the first refugees from leaving what was soon to be the site of massive destruction. As those who live behind walls often discover, their so-called protection all too readily becomes their prison.

Before Daenna, Sarrath, and their cousins could do more than sit up, the door opened and several soldiers ducked inside the low entrance. Instinctively Sarrath maneuvered his massive body between his sister and the strangers. Daenna could hear the low growl of challenge in Sarrath's throat as she hunted desperately in her skirts for the golden fruit.

Seizing upon the treasure, Daenna pulled it from her pocket. Even as the soldiers ordered all those within to submit to a search, Daenna glanced

one last time at the faintly glowing fruit. Its skin appeared almost liquid in its firelit beauty as Daenna carefully carved it in two and plucked five rounded seeds from its silver-veined flesh. Placing these in a locket she wore by her heart, Daenna brought the Fruit of the Tree of Knowledge to her lips and bit into its glory. Once tasted, the fruit was quickly consumed and in that union of the Fruit of the Tree and the flesh of our mother were born the Rom.

I have heard no tale teller or story spinner attempt to describe what Daenna must have felt when the fruit burned its splendor into her body and soul. Not even Black Ellen, who can cause her listeners to feel the heat of flames or the aching of love with but a few words, would attempt to describe that moment. It is beyond all words, beyond all ken.

Much later, Daenna awoke to find herself being carried in her brother's arms through the milling crowds of refugees waiting to escape the city. Staring into the quiet desperation of the crowd, Daenna willed them to move, to be free. And they were. With one voice, the refugees surged toward the gates, suddenly impassioned and empowered by their need to be free.

Shocked by the sudden change in the crowd, the guards were quickly overwhelmed, and thus Daenna and Sarrath passed unnoticed through the gates of the doomed city.

Daenna and Sarrath never stopped traveling from that day onward. Through the years, Daenna chose others to join them. Daenna lived many years, as long as most shilmulo, it is said, and she was the mother of some say ten, and others say ten tens, of Gypsies. And each of her children was special, for in each burned the same impassioned, magical Blood of their mother. Many had fantastic abilities, although none were as powerful as Daenna.

One day Daenna, still youthful and beautiful, took one of her own great-granddaughters aside and presented her with the locket and the Seeds. Telling the chosen one that the Gypsies were to always be the Guardians of the Seeds of Knowledge, Daenna instructed her descendant to keep the Seeds safe, always carrying them next to her breast.



Daenna taught her descendants much of the ways of magic and of using the Sight. She spoke to them as Dracian had once spoken to her, and her children listened and learned. When she felt she had taught us all we needed, she left us. Where she went is unknown to this very day. Perhaps she lives on still, as ageless and immortal as the most powerful faeries and vampires. Perhaps one day she will return to tell us once again the many secrets we have lost. Yet despite our loss of knowledge, we still know more than any other people of the true workings of the world on all its myriad levels.

Over the centuries, the Gypsies grew as a people, but always we traveled. Others could sense our strangeness, could sense the magic of our Blood, and were frightened by it. They still are. Today we are many, but the families have fractured and few remember all or most of the lessons we once knew so well. But we still have great knowledge. It is unfortunate that so many of the purest families have begun to war with each other, but not all members of the warring families support these battles. Our true future lies in the young who embrace all of the Rom, for we are all of the same family, all of the same mother, and all of the same Blood.

No matter what, you must remember that, young one, or you will have sullied your heritage, becoming *marume*, impure. I am tired now and need my rest. Sleep on these truths, dream on them, but first, stir up the embers of the fire.



Chapter Two: The People

*You're an accident
Waiting to happen
You're a piece of glass
Left there on the beach*

U2 "Who's Gonna Ride Your Wild Horses"

The Romani (often referred to as the Gypsies) are an old and unusual people whose history remains hidden in the mists of the past. Stories passed down through time from parent to child weave the tapestry of the Romani's heritage. Like all great works of art, the stories are often embellished. While some of the work may be true in fact, much is only true in essence. Of course, some sections of the work have been made up whole cloth just for the hell of it. After all, the Romani people understand the importance of play. The Romani know not all stories and legends are true, but which are fact and which fancy is not of great importance to them.

Even today, the Romani transmit their history orally, with outsiders responsible for most written treatises on these people. Since the Romani feel it is

both proper and wise to bend and even break the truth when dealing with the gaje, such texts are certainly suspect to a far greater degree than what the Romani tell one another.

The Gypsies hold a unique position in the world. Gypsy families can be found in most of the world's countries, from Brazil to Russia, the United States to India. Some have settled down in one city, taking part in the underground economy of the area, but most still travel from place to place. Although these traveling Gypsies tend to have a fairly set route that they follow every year, The Gypsies are a varied people with seemingly little in common besides their loyalty to each other and the value they place in a freewheeling lifestyle. But each true Gypsy also has one other thing in common: the Blood.



The Blood has been transmitted through many generations from Daenna, the original Gypsy woman who ate of the Fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. The Blood grants the Gypsies unique powers and abilities, but it also carries a price. Gypsies have been persecuted for millennia. Gaje sense the Gypsies' "otherness," and shy away in distrust and even hatred of the mysterious strangers. Although few of today's Gypsies realize the true power and responsibility they carry within, some of the best-schooled remember, and pass the knowledge on to their descendants and apprentices, who pass it on again in turn.

Around campfires in the Balkans and over micro-nuked meals in trailer parks, the Gypsies tell their children the stories of their past.

The information found in this chapter will give Storytellers and players an idea of what it means to be a member of the Romani, a true Gypsy, in the World of Darkness. The chapter presents an over

view of the lifestyle, ethos and traditions of the average Gypsy. Remember, though, that no Gypsy is truly average, and each member of the Rom keeps the fires of her own individuality burning fiercely in her heart.

The Lifestyle

*The fabulous freaks are leaving town
They are driven by a strange desire
Unseen by the human eye*

— Dead Can Dance, "The Carnival is Over"

The Gypsies have been a traveling people ever since Daenna and Sarrath first fled the Ivory City amid a vast sea of refugees. Over the years, various families and factions have formed as the Gypsies spread and multiplied, each becoming more specialized in the process. Yet each family continues to hold dear the freedom of the road.

For many years, Gypsies traveled from town to town in wagons known as *vardos*. A few Gypsy families maintain this practice even today, but most Gypsies have been forced to adjust their old lifestyle to the onset of technology. In fact, many Gypsies have been unusually creative, cleverly adapting new technologies to their own advantage. Modern Gypsies travel North America in caravans consisting of trailer homes, Cadillacs and Harleys; some even have computer systems to enhance their eclectic businesses. Laptops and other forms of portable technology have become particularly valued among many Gypsies.

Gypsies have grown particularly fond of modems, traveling the burgeoning information highway with the same panache they do the cracked blacktop of the interstates. Although Gypsies are, as yet, a minor presence on the net, they are beginning to make an impact by running electronic scams and creating magically altered modems, which can crack security measures or even pilfer information from any computer that has ever hooked into the net. Many other electronic devices have been altered or refined to extract money from automatic teller machines, charge items on gaje credit cards, and perform other useful business dealings.

During the past century, many governments have stepped up efforts to coerce, bribe, or even force the Gypsies to give up their traveling lifestyle (when they aren't busy trying to kick the Gypsies out altogether!). Governments can't stand a large group of individuals that refuses to be labeled, marked and categorized. A Gypsy changes her Social Security number (if she even has one) as easily as your average American would change a tire. This type of behavior and constant movement make it extremely difficult for governments to monitor Gypsies, and just about impossible for governments to control them.

Most governments also try to force Gypsies to keep their children in normal schools—which the Gypsies refuse to do, preferring to educate their children in their own manner. The education received by young Romani is usually quite different than that of most children, and this separation helps the Gypsies maintain their own traditions and culture amidst the pressures of modern civilization.

Oral Tradition

Sit my friends and listen

Put your glasses down

Sit my friends and listen

To the voices of the drowned

— The Pogues, "The Wake of the Medusa"

There is no such thing as a written version of Romany, the language of the Gypsies. Although there are numerous dialects of Romany, it is a purely oral language, with history and traditions passing verbally from generation to generation. This helps ensure that information sacred to the Rom will not be discovered by outsiders.

It also means that many young Gypsies do not learn how to read and write, or are barely literate in any language. In the modern world, this can be a large barrier to the Gypsies, although some clans have begun to allow their children to stay in school just long enough to learn these basic skills, but not long enough to become slaves to the government.

Persecution

We are not racists

We are only against Gypsies

— Anonymous protester in an anti-Gypsy demonstration

For as long as there have been Gypsies, there have been those who wish to see their destruction. The reasons for Gypsy persecution are many, but several in particular stand out. The first of these is the Gypsy lifestyle. Gypsies enter towns and villages as outsiders, belonging to no country. The ways of the Romani seem strange, perhaps even senseless to many, and this nonconformity can lead to fear, and even hatred, in the gaje.

Many gaje also see the Gypsies as nothing more than vagabonds, roving gangs just out to make a quick buck. While it is true that a Gypsy feels it is perfectly reasonable to take from a gaje by hook or by crook, so to speak, many Gypsies ply other, so-called honest, trades. Common occupations for Gypsies include auto mechanics, palm readers, couriers, storytellers, artisans, and entertainers of all kinds.

Many religious and secular leaders have condemned the Gypsies, ordering them cast out,



imprisoned or worse. During World War II, Hitler ordered the Gypsies murdered along with the Jews and the many other groups who perished during the Holocaust. Perhaps as many as one million Gypsies died in the Nazi concentration camps.

Their unusual racial powers and the sheer aura of strangeness many gaje sense when near someone of Romani heritage also set the Gypsies apart. This too can lead to fear and confusion in the gaje, and people often attempt to destroy what they cannot truly comprehend.

Certain of the more erudite members of the Phuri Dae, the family of Rom lore-keepers, have referred to the unnerving "otherness" of those of the Blood as the *prikaza*, or bad luck, of Cassandra. Cassandra was a Greek woman with the ability to foresee the future, but she was cursed so that none would believe her predictions. While many believe the Gypsy fortune-tellers, the Gypsies are forever kept from the trust of almost all other people by their Blood, which grants some the Sight.

Today the Gypsies still face persecution. In Germany, while almost all other groups are allowed into the country, thousands of Gypsies wait on the edge of starvation to be deported back to Romania and other countries. Groups of skinheads, neo-Nazis, and the like terrorize the Gypsies in Europe and America. Young Romani are also being coerced into joining the junior Mafia and other such organizations, where their skills can be exploited for the benefit of the gaje.

Recently, some Rom families have begun to experience strange disappearances of young Gypsies. Even those with the Sight have been baffled, although the Rom now suspect that they are being persecuted by a particularly evil corporation known as Magadon, Inc., which may be attempting experiments requiring Gypsy Blood. If this is confirmed, the Gypsies will come to the aid of their missing fellows as swiftly as possible.

Meanwhile, many of the Gypsies are being lost to a subtler enemy. Slowly becoming enmeshed in a sedentary lifestyle, caught in the webs of civilization, the music of their Blood and heritage grows faint. Yet there are still many Romani who hear the calling of their Blood and defy other masters. "It has always been so, and it will always be thus," as an old Gypsy saying goes.

Ethos

The family and the clan are the two main social structures in the Gypsies' world. The family includes all relations, but the closer the blood relation, the stronger the bond felt. When a Gypsy marries, the family of her spouse becomes her own. In a very real sense, many Gypsies view anyone of Romani Blood as a member of their family, and thus will treat any Gypsy with far more respect than any non-Gypsy.

This is not to say that Gypsies do not feud amongst each other. When the heads of two opposing factions declare war, there is almost nothing the two sides won't do to force each other to give ground. Even the gaje will be brought into the matter via anonymous phone tips to the police about the illegal activities and attacks of the other side. Whether there is any truth to such allegations is irrelevant to the contenders. The Gypsies may even go to trial. They attest to so many accusations, both true and false, that the proceedings often turn into a complete farce.

Normally, however, the Gypsies will band together against anyone not of Romani Blood.

The Families

There are many, many different Gypsy families scattered throughout the world. Each has its own unique traditions and ways, and even the Romany language varies from family to family and continent to continent. Each family also has its own King or Queen, the final arbiter of the family's ways and any intrafamily disputes. Various Gypsies have attempted to hold themselves up as the King or Queen of the Gypsies, but only gaje truly believe such nonsense. Save for Daenna, there has never been a single leader of the Rom.

Today, the vast majority of Gypsies no longer remember much of their true heritage. Slowly, their heritage has been whittled away by the incursions of more sedentary civilizations, and by physical and cultural attacks on the Gypsies themselves. Who knows how much knowledge was lost during the brief period known as the Holocaust?

However, a few families remain attuned to at least some of their true heritage and knowledge. These families tend to be of purer Blood, and to have far more intimate contact with certain aspects of



that heritage. To belong to one of these families is to embrace, in some manner, what it truly means to be a Gypsy.

The five families of Gypsies described below still maintain, as families, some part of the esoteric knowledge taught by Daenna to her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Chapter five describes these families in greater detail. These are just a sampling of the more prominently known families. There are many other Gypsy families scattered throughout the world that also recognize at least some measure of their innate powers and their position in the world's past and future. Some are made up of no more than 20 members, and others are as large as a handful of thousands. The true extent of the Gypsies' role in history is not known by any one family, even the Phuri Dae, although they may at times claim other

wise

The Ravnos

This family of Gypsies is related to certain shilmulo, or vampires; some members are themselves shilmulo. Individual Ravnos vampires tend to watch over their own family line, looking for someone who is particularly "worthy" of the Embrace. New Ravnos can be chosen from any clan, although certain families have a history of being chosen. The families who carry the name "Ravnos" are aware of their ancient connection to the vampires. Although most Gypsies know enough to be polite to any shilmulo they encounter, those of the Ravnos family are as active as mortals can be in vampiric politics and society.

Unlike other vampires, the Ravnos shilmulo often maintain contact with certain members of their family. They may even travel with the humans, using them as retainers and guards. However, not all Gypsy families look kindly on the Ravnos, and sometimes a young Gypsy is transformed against the will of her family. Even so, that Gypsy, and any members of her immediate family she chooses, may then become attached to one of the traveling Ravnos families.

The Lupines

The werewolf tribe known as the Silent Striders has long been associated with the Gypsies. In fact, Daenna's companion and brother, Sarrath, was one of the first of that line. Since that time almost all





Gypsy clans have had an affinity, or at least respect, for the wolf. The Lupine clan is made up almost exclusively of Gypsies who are kin to werewolves, or are themselves werewolves.

Traveling families from this clan often form small carnivals and circuses, allowing them to keep wolves in their midst. This practice has kept the Silent Striders and their kin from losing as much lupine blood as have many of the other werewolf tribes. The kin of these werewolves are fiercely loyal to their lupine brothers and sisters. The Silent Striders themselves are loyal to Gaia, but they are also loyal to their fellow Gypsies. This double loyalty causes the Striders to remain somewhat aloof and vague about their ways when dealing with werewolves from other tribes.

The Urmen

This clan has maintained a relationship with those most elusive of beings: the faeries. Gypsies are almost unique among humans in their acknowledgment and even support of the faerie changelings. The Urmen go even further in their support, actively searching out and aiding such beings whenever possible. This clan is very reclusive, and families have been known to disappear for entire generations, only to reappear perhaps 50 years later, their members looking exactly as they had when they left. It is rumored that some members of such clans may actually be of the Wyld, or at least have faerie blood mixed with the Blood of their Roman heritage. Such Gypsies are said to have fantastic abilities.

Of the two known Urme families, one is currently reported to be traveling throughout Russia, while the other is said to move in Greece and the surrounding islands. There are accounts of a third family, which disappeared from the Scottish Highlands shortly after the turn of the century, but whether it still exists in fact, as it does in legend, is unknown.

The Phuri Dae

This family boasts the most adept fortune-tellers and spiritualists of all the families. Often, when a young Gypsy displays exceptional abilities in this area, she is married into this family. Although there are extremely talented seers in all Gypsy families, the Phuri Dae are the most carefully trained.

It is the Phuri Dae who are the true carriers of the Gypsy heritage. The members of this family unfailingly pass on to their children the stories of Daenna, the Tree of Knowledge, and the remaining Seeds. A Gypsy of the Phuri Dae is very likely to know a good deal about vampires, werewolves, faeries, ghosts, mummies and much more. This family is also very aware of the Gypsies' role as Guardians of the Secret and their role as wildcards throughout history. They wait in anticipation to play their role in the approaching Convergence.

The Tsurara

This extremely tight-knit family is also one of the smallest of all Gypsy families. Unlike other families, the Tsurara (also known as the Slayers or Knife Tribe) are almost unrelentingly committed to the destruction of all vampires, most particularly the Ravnos, who they view as traitors to the Gypsies and no longer of the Blood. Not content to let things come their way, the Tsurara teach their offspring to actively hunt the bloodsuckers and other enemies of the Rom.

Younger members of the Tsurara tend to be radicals, and a disturbing number of them are forming gangs as violent and intolerant as any skinhead or neo-Nazi groups.

The Blood

The world today is sick to its thin blood for lack of elemental things, for fire before the hands, for water welling from the earth, for air, for the dear earth itself underfoot.

— Henry Beston, *The Outermost House*

The Romani value their bloodlines more than perhaps any other race. According to Romani legend, when Daenna, the mother of the Gypsies, first bit into the Fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, her Blood and the Blood of her descendants, was forever altered. They say Dracian originally designed the fruit to bring a vampire to a level of awareness and control similar to, or perhaps greater than, that achieved in the state known as Golconda. However, when the human Daenna ate of the fruit, she was altered in a different manner.

She achieved great power, the true extent of which is not now known. The Phuri Dae say that she gained the ability to read minds and to foretell the

Possessions

*If the Gypsy man is weary,
There's a horse in the farmer's stall
If the Gypsy child is hungry,
There's a hen near the granary wall,
If the Gypsy lads are thirsty,
There's beer enough for all,
And if there's naught in the Gypsy's hand,
There are wealthy gorgios in all the land*
— Gypsy folk song

Gypsies view possessions and material things far differently than do the people of most other modern cultures. A Gypsy knows that true poverty comes from clinging too much to possessions and wealth. It is far too easy to become a slave to one's possessions, as witnessed by everything from the expense people devote to alarm systems and guards to the casual killing of children for their sneakers. "What possession is truly worth killing for?" the Gypsy will ask.

To the Rom, freedom is the greatest treasure of all. Gypsies do enjoy helping possessions come their way, but when a Gypsy is wealthy, he is not so attached to his possessions that he will not risk them all on some whim. Or he might simply leave something behind when it becomes more of a burden than a pleasure. After all, if he needs another fortune, he is sure to find or acquire one in short order.

Gypsies view possessions simply as tools to further their happiness, comfort, and freedom, but the tools are of no importance in and of themselves. They attribute true importance only to life's intangibles: emotion, family, and freedom.

future. She is also rumored to have gained a new perception of time, overcoming the linear perception of the fourth dimension which others possess. Daenna is said to have studied with many masters of the magical arts over the years and to have achieved in incredible degree of control over her powers. Such masters were said to be amazed at the ease with which Daenna learned their ways.

No matter the true breadth of her talents, it is certain that all of her descendants have at least some small measure of this power flowing in their veins. This does not mean that all Gypsies have psychic or



magical powers, but only that all Gypsies carry the legacy of their heritage. Some of the ramifications of this bequest will be discussed below and throughout this book.

The Seeds of Knowledge

When Daenna fled the Ivory City she carried with her the Seeds of the Tree of Knowledge. Thus, Daenna was the first Guardian of the Seeds of Knowledge. These five Seeds contain the legacy of the first Tree of Knowledge. Along with the Blood, Daenna bequeathed to her children the task to remain ever the Guardians of the Seeds.

Although little save rumor and myth remains of Daenna's teachings, speculation as to the powers of the five Seeds is ever present. According to legend, each Seed represents a distinct form of knowledge, the Guardian of that Seed gains access to both tremendous power and enhanced understanding of the world. Of course, a Rom who is chosen as Guardian for more than one Seed holds tremendous power and knowledge, perhaps unequaled by any

except the most learned and powerful of mages. It is said that if a gaje comes into contact with one of the Seeds, his blood will be too weak, unworthy of the Seed's power, and that the Seed will utterly corrupt the weak and unwise gaje.

The little information regarding the five Seeds that is considered valid by the wisest of the Rom is given below, but bear in mind that such information is, at best, a combination of legend and educated speculation.

Kooserren, the Seed of Earthly Awakening

This Seed is said to hold the simple knowledge of truth. All lies and fabrications, from the smallest self-deceit to the most intricate plottings of the Inconnu, are as ephemeral as a soap bubble when faced with a Rom bearing this Seed. But such profound knowledge of the truth is a terrible onus to bear. The world, in all its ugliness and raw glory, is stripped naked before one whose eyes have been so forcefully opened.

For one not of the Blood, this knowledge would almost certainly twist and claw its way into the soul.



It is said that a gaje-faced with the awesome starkness of this ultimate truth will become engulfed by lies and fantasies, believing that others are wealthier, more beautiful, and securer than they truly are. The gaje will be overcome by the belief that others have true knowledge, while he is told only lies. Believing this, the gaje will refuse to see any of the truth that so overwhelms his mind and soul.

Jalomasin, the Seed of Stars

The mind's eye of the Guardian of this Seed is opened so wide it is likened unto the sky, for Jalomasin grants the ability to comprehend great masses of knowledge without forgetfulness or confusion. As the sky always has room for one more star, the Guardian's mind can always hold one more piece of knowledge.

But such knowledge will overwhelm anyone not of the Blood, causing the gaje to become overly voracious in all things. The gaje will be unable to quit any endeavor she begins, until forced to by others around her or by her own physical collapse from exhaustion.

Ruzlekin, the Seed of Burning Tears

No injustice, small or large, can escape the notice of the Guardian of this Seed. Ruzlekin is the Seed of justice and the rage of the Guardian is truly awesome. Some of the Phun Dae claim Daenna gave this Seed to her brother, Sarath, who then spent many years searching out and destroying those who would create sickness in Gaia, the Earth.

This Seed would cause much havoc in the hands of a gaje, as the rage would be too powerful for her to bear. Soon the gaje would perceive justice as whatever was best for her, and she would become homicidally furious at anyone who stood in the way of her goals.

Fiavelan, the Seed of Brightest Waters

Fiavelan brings the knowledge of the true self. A Rom who takes up this Seed will have the assurance of knowing her true abilities and nature. Limits imposed by outside forces and the false expectations

that lead to failure all drop away from the Guardian's eyes, allowing her to accept her true self. Once she has done this, the Guardian may act with the confidence brought about by utter self acceptance.

The reflection of Eiavelan will bring only false pride to any gaje who touches this Seed, as the gaje will see only false images of the self he wishes he were. Soon, the gaje will be swallowed up by his own sense of ego and pride, coming to believe that all others are as nothing when compared to his god-like abilities and skills.

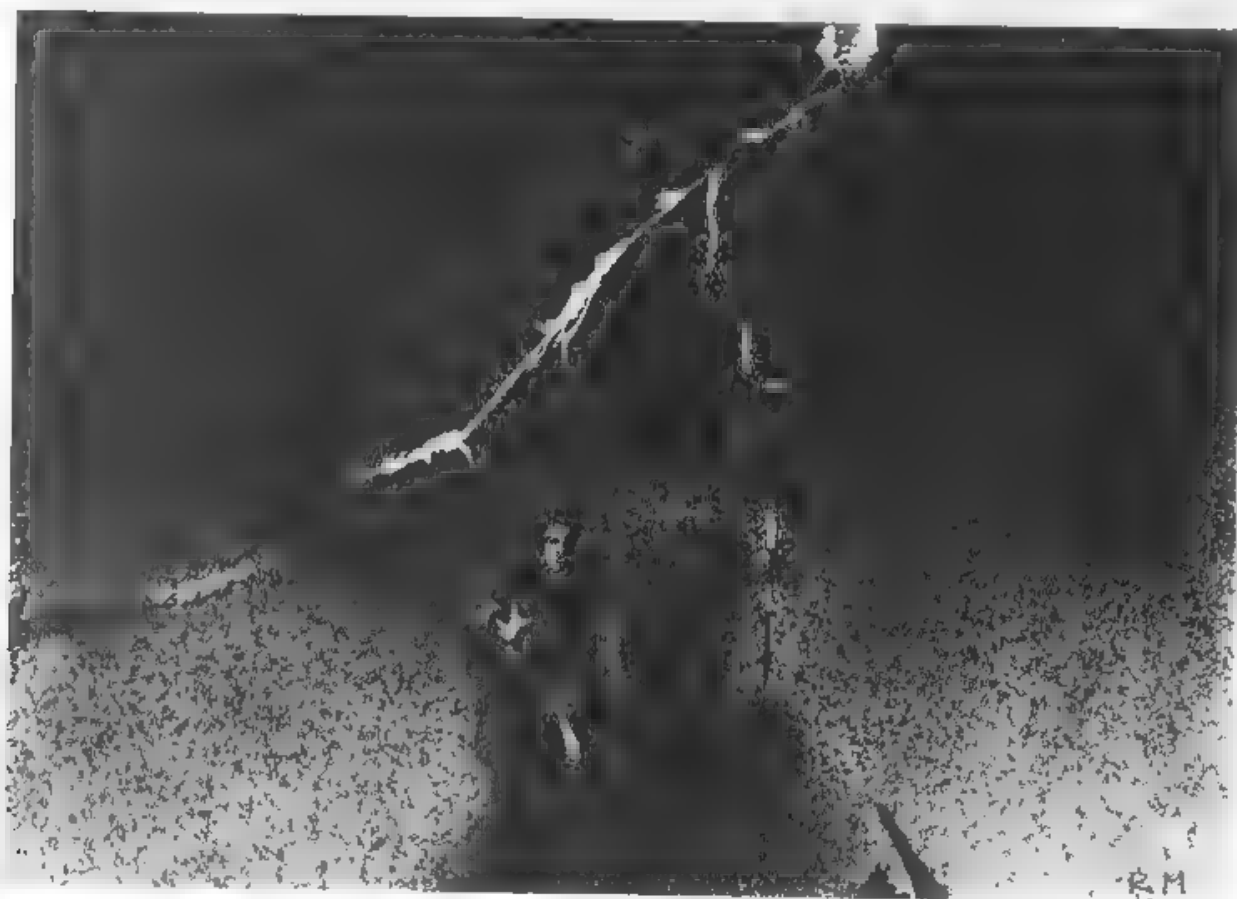
Bonnerin, the Seed of the Balanced Scale

This Seed grants the Guardian knowledge of the intrinsic value of all things. This knowledge has nothing to do with what stereo speakers are going for these days. Rather, the Guardian instinctively understands what each thing is worth to her personally. She can never be deceived by others or even by herself into believing a thing has value because others want it, or lacks value because it is spurned.

Of course, a gaje possessing this Seed would most assuredly be caught up in a frenzy of greed, feeling certain that all things have some value and thus must belong to him. Consumed by the need to possess, the gaje would soon lose interest in people altogether, concerning himself only with the value of his many "prizes."

Guardians of Knowledge

It is said that when she passed the Seeds to her great-granddaughter, Evania, Daenna spoke of seeing a time when the Guardians would know how the Seeds were to be used. Many Rom believe the time for their use is coming soon, in the upcoming Convergence, when it is said the five Seeds will split open and grow together to form a tree linking both the body and spirit, which have been falsely split for many, many eons. The current Guardian(s?) of the Seeds are unknown, although it is often assumed that each Seed is held by a member of one of the more prominent families of power.





The Seeds of Knowledge are said to be round and deep brown, with silvery veins covering both sides in the shape of five-pointed stars. The Gypsies believe these pentagrams represent the five elements: earth, air, fire, water, and spirit. Each Seed is said to correspond to one of these elements. As the Egyptians who built the Great Pyramids knew, there is power in such a five-pointed construction: four elements culminating in another, both containing and greater than each individual part.

Depending on which Romani drabarne, or wise one, tells the story, there are two branches of thought on how the elements are represented by the remaining families of power. The first theory holds that the Romani representatives of the five elements are already present and accounted for in the families known as the Ravnos, Lupines, Urmen, Phuri Dae and Tsurara. This theory is held by all of the Slayers who care, and by scattered others throughout the rest of the families. According to this theory, either the Tsurara or the Phuri Dae hold the trump card and are the apex of all that is Romani. The Slayers maintain that they are the Rom, honed to a cutting edge, and that the others' time is past; other Romani generally hold that the Phuri Dae will be the ones to witness the Tree of Knowledge blossom at the Convergence. Dark rumors abound that the Tsurara are attempting to systematically hunt down and slaughter the current Guardians of the Seeds so that the Slayers will possess all the Seeds and be the Rom who control the destiny of the world (as they see it) at the Convergence.

The second theory, accepted by most of the Phuri Dae and Lupines, and many of the Ravnos who bother to give their opinions, is that the four families known as the Ravnos, Urmen, Lupines and Phuri Dae correspond to the elements of earth, air, fire, and water. This being the case, the Tsurara are seen as *maritime*, impure, their Blood tainted, and thus are removed from any possible role as Guardians of the Seeds.

Such Gypsies believe some combination of Rom from these four tribes, perhaps including one or two of the other scattered families of power as well, will come together and play the key role for the Romani at the time of the Convergence. Therefore, many Rom, the younger Rom in particular, are encouraged by the elders to do "a tour," as they term it. Such tours

involve young members of Rom from different families banding together and traveling for awhile. Touring promotes the mixing of both Romani Blood and ideas, and it is in such intense and private groups, tossed out on the churning waves of gaje culture, that many young Rom prove themselves worthy of the name. Also, the elder Romani hope these temporary groupings will heal the fractures of suspicion and hate that have begun poisoning even the Blood of the Rom and chipping away at their now-fragile unity.

Debates rage over open fires and in the back rooms of clubs and bars over which theory is nearest to correct, or whether there is still another answer to the question. But as with most things esoteric or remote in the world of the Rom, parties on both sides argue more for the sake of the contest of wits than because they could possibly arrive at any conclusion. The Gypsies feel that when the Convergence begins, they will know what to do and where to go to get front row seats.

Others and the Seeds

Many wonder how the Gypsies have managed to keep the Seeds hidden and secret from almost all others. It would seem that over the many centuries some outsiders would hear of the Seeds. There most assuredly are those not of Romani Blood who know of the Seeds of the Tree of Knowledge. After all, the vampire Amriat destroyed Dracian in his desire to take the Tree of Knowledge and its fruit for himself. It is entirely possible that Amriat realized that Seeds from the Tree were still in existence.

If there are others, particularly powerful vampires or mages, who know of the Seeds, a question immediately comes to mind: How have the Gypsies survived? They are an inventive people who have outlasted severe persecution, but it still seems unlikely that they could hold off such powerful creatures forever.

The answer to this question is unknown. However, it is often speculated that the group of vampires known as the Inconnu recognize the role of the Gypsies as the rightful Guardians of the Seeds, and believe that when the time is right, the Seeds will be used to the advantage of the Inconnu. Or perhaps the Inconnu simply feel that they will be able to

control the situation when the time comes, using their knowledge of the Gypsies at some crucial point to manipulate the Gypsies' role in the upcoming Gehenna. There is rampant speculation that certain powerful mages also wish to keep the Seeds in the hands of the Rom until some unspecified future time, although why this would be the case is unknown.

There is yet another theory on why no one else has taken control of the Seeds from the Gypsies. It is thought that none but a true Rom can hold a Seed without perishing. If the mages have heard this theory, it may well explain why they have so far left the Seeds alone, or been unsuccessful in any attempts to seize them. The bond of Blood and spirit that the Gypsies have with the Seeds may serve as their protection. A similar rumor holds that the Seeds must always be kept close to the beating heart of a Gypsy, as Daenna hid them near her heart, else they turn to dust, gone for all eternity.

Whatever the truth in this matter, the Gypsies have so far kept the Seeds in their possession and fulfilled one of their major responsibilities as a race.

The Convergence

*I am assured at any rate
Man's practically inexterminate
Someday I must go into that
There's always been an Ararat
Where someone someone else begat
To start the world all over at*

— Robert Frost, "A-Wishing Well"

Many of the oldest Gypsies say that the universe is a slumbering giant, and that when she stretches, the very nature of reality shifts as well. However, it takes time for the moves of such a giantess to reach her toes, and the Gypsies place the Earth upon her littlest left toe. The stars, they say, will align to tell the Gypsies of the latest reality shift, so that they will be prepared when the world mother's latest shrug reaches her toes. This time is known as the Convergence.

Others say that the universe is like a snake that traces her way along her own body looking for her tail. When she reaches her tail, she begins to swallow

herself, and just as she swallows her own head, the universe changes and is reborn. The time of change is the time of the Convergence, and it is written in the stars

The Gypsies believe that they have a crucial role to play at the time of the Convergence, and that their actions will help decide what the Earth will be like in the dawning of the new age. The true nature of their role in the Convergence is a matter for debate. The Gypsies are curious, but they also know that what will be, will be. The oldest and most popular theory goes as follows:

Our mother, Daenna, gave into our trust the five Seeds of knowledge. They have been scattered throughout our families for many, many years, but when the stars wheel and dance in the skies, so will the Seeds come together from across the lands. When the Seeds are planted together and watered with five drops of Daenna's gift, then will they sprout and grow together into the World Tree that holds all knowledge. It will be given to the Gypsies to eat of its fruit and climb among its branches, and the tree will be so great that it will be as a highway stretching to our sister the moon. On that day, the day of the Convergence, and on that road, the road of the World Tree, our actions will decide how the next dance is to be danced, the next song to be sung

There are many variations on this story and even more interpretations of its true meaning. One variation says that Alako, a Gypsy who drank of God's tears, will return from his home on the moon and grant his people the ability to walk between the light and the dark, between the gods and humanity. Others say the World Tree will bear more of the sacred Fruit of Knowledge and that any who eat of this fruit three times will be transported into the realm of faerie upon eating the first apple, into the realm of death on biting into the second, and then, after partaking of the third, reborn into the world again to decide the fate of all.

Regardless of the words of the tale, the Gypsies all believe that the Convergence is growing near, and that they will play an important part in deciding the fate of the world. It is the reason their race was born, and the Seeds are the burden they must bear until they have completed their appointed task.

Purity vs. Contamination

The Gypsies harbor a strong belief that maintaining purity is critical. All Gypsies are extraordinarily careful to never eat food that is dirty, and Gypsies almost never refer to bodily fluids or functions. If a Gypsy is so unfortunate as to sully herself by becoming somehow contaminated, she must perform elaborate cleansing rituals before she can again eat with, touch or truly socialize with other Gypsies. It is not unheard of for a Gypsy to kill herself if she believes she has been forever contaminated

The views on purity and contamination held by the Romani have been formed as protective measures. On the surface, most gaje researchers regard them simply as beliefs developed to keep Gypsies from eating bad food, to prevent disease, etc. This is eminently logical, but it is not the only reason the Gypsies hold on to their taboos.

Gypsies keep secret the special abilities passed to them through their Blood. Few of today's Romani know the reason behind the taboo against referring to Blood and other bodily fluids. Daenna and her descendants knew it was imperative that the heritage passed through the Fruit of the Tree of Knowledge not be discovered by those such as the Antediluvians, or by any of a number of paranoid leaders among the gaje, lest every last Rom be hunted down. The taboos help preserve the sanctity of the Gypsies' secrets; thus, the ancient knowledge only surfaces during times when it is needed.

Many of the Phuri Dae believe that Hitler had discovered the power of their Blood and was thus committed to destroying the Rom. The purity and superiority of the Gypsies' Blood may have intrigued as well as enraged Hitler and the SS. Rumors also speak of terrible torture and experimentation performed on some of the Rom held in concentration camps, in which large amounts of Blood were extracted from the prisoners. This Blood may have been intended for use in the dark rituals of certain high ranking officers of the SS, who were also said to be dark mages.



Wildcards

*Our conscious lives run deep
you cling unto your mountain while we sleep
this way of life is part of me
there is no price so only let me be
And, should the children weep
the turning world will sing their souls to sleep
When you have sunk without a trace
the universe will suck me into place*

Sting, "We Work the Black Seam"

The Gypsies appear to have another, related role to play in the history of the world. They are the wildcards, the trump cards of fate, as it were. Something in every Gypsy's Blood provides the potential for that Gypsy to find herself playing a key role in history. It has happened many times in the past, and it is sure to happen many times in the future.

The Gypsies hold that there is no way of knowing who will be selected to play such a role or why, save perhaps that the Gypsy is somehow in the right place at the crucial time. Young Gypsy children are

always told that they should follow their instincts, and that if they are chosen to play fate's hand, they will know it when the time comes.

The Gaje

Gypsies see themselves as unique among all the world's peoples. They may well be right. The Romani people thus hold an entirely different set of ethics when it comes to outsiders (gaje). Even if she stands before her most-hated Romani enemy, a Gypsy will treat that enemy with more respect than she would almost any outsider. This double standard has evolved over many centuries, and probably came about in part due to the knowledge and abilities granted to the Gypsies from their Blood, and partly due to their almost universally poor treatment by members of other races.

Today's Gypsies do not feel it is ethical to lie to cheat or steal from another Romani. However, it is perfectly appropriate to manipulate and use a gaje. After all, if the gaje is gullible or slow-witted enough to fall for the Gypsy's tricks, then the Gypsy was meant to succeed at her endeavor.

This ethical double standard has led the gaje to misunderstand and even hate the Gypsies. It has also led the Gypsies to develop numerous elaborate plots and schemes to exploit the gaje for money and trinkets.

An example of such an elaborate scheme is the bujo, or swindle, in which a Gypsy woman sets up a fortune-telling store. It does not matter whether the woman has the Sight or not, for she will have no need of it to conduct the bujo. The Gypsy woman carefully interrogates the gaje who come to her for help. When she finds a likely (read, desperate or gullible) candidate, she uses a particularly dramatic way to illustrate the horrible "bad luck," known as *prikaza*, that is plaguing the poor person. Perhaps she doctors a chicken egg so that the yolk "bleeds" when it is broken, or she might use sleight of hand to replace one of the tarot cards she is reading for her "client" with a scorched version of the same card.

No matter what form the evil omen takes, the Gypsy cries out and shakes her head ominously. Usually the worried victim asks what the matter is, and the Gypsy woman tells the client that the news is not good, but perhaps she is wrong, so she will not worry the client by telling her. The client invariably insists on hearing the bad news, and the Gypsy will gravely tell the client that she sees terrible luck, perhaps even death, plaguing the client. She then tells the client that there is one possible source of this bad luck — perhaps the client has gotten hold of some cursed money? After all, money and the love of it lead to the path of the Devil. She will then hastily return any money the gaje has paid for her services as "she does not want to be contaminated as well."

After a bit of talk about this problem, the Gypsy asks the client to give her some small bill, a ten or twenty, so that she may determine if the money is indeed cursed. Of course, the Gypsy always finds out that, yes, there is a terrible curse. But she can remove it! The hitch is that all the client's money has probably been infected by the curse, and so the client should bring the Gypsy a suitcase filled with money. In order to undo the curse some of the money must be destroyed.

Once the client has brought as much money as the Gypsy can convince him to bring, she performs a great ritual that ends in the burning of much of the "tainted" money. Of course the money hasn't really

been burned. At some point, the Gypsy switches the bag full of money for a bag full of paper, keeping the money for herself.

Although it may seem incredible, there are many gaje who have lost a lot of money to Gypsies by falling for such schemes. In one bujo alone, a Gypsy can easily pull in over \$10,000. In one particular bujo, perhaps the most profitable one so far, a Gypsy woman bilked her victim out of over \$100,000 in cash.

Many gaje view the word of a Romani as being about as trustworthy as a politician's campaign promises. When dealing with the gaje this is usually true. But when a Gypsy gives her word to a fellow Romani it is inviolate. This same double standard threads throughout the Romani's dealings. When interacting with another of the Blood, the Romani are honest, trustworthy, faithful and loyal. But when dealing with an outsider, no Gypsy holds his brother to the same standard. After all, the gaje are not to be trusted, and so are unworthy of a Gypsy's trust.

This view of non-Gypsies is one of the reasons that gaje who try to chronicle the Romani often come away with utterly implausible or contradictory stories. The Gypsies delight in feeding misinformation to these oh-so-earnest chroniclers. Very few of those who attempt to enter the Gypsy world truly succeed. Often a researcher believes he has succeeded, when in actuality, he is the victim of an elaborate Gypsy joke.

The separation maintained by the Gypsies allows their culture to continue, despite all the pressures for them to conform to other cultures' standards. But their attitudes and beliefs contribute to their strangeness in the eyes of the gaje. People often hate what they don't understand, and almost no outsider understands the Romani. The misinformation fed to outsiders sometimes spirals out of control, resulting in the belief that Gypsies kidnap young children and engage in other monstrous crimes. These beliefs fan the flames of hatred toward the already mistrusted Romani. Thus, the Gypsies walk a tightrope, rarely more than a step away from oblivion.

Touring

As mentioned earlier, over the past few centuries it has become common practice for young Gypsies from different families to band together and do a tour, for the most part staying among the gaje or on



their own. Originally this practice was a strange mimicking offshoot of the fostering of children which the upper and middle classes of Europe favored 400 years ago. Many of the older Rom recognized a distinct advantage in having their young pick up secrets of the trade from other families. It was a particularly convenient way of spying on one another that most Romani parents could not resist. The practice also had the benefit of exposing young Rom to the youth of other families and to their differing beliefs and lifestyles, thus keeping the connection of the Blood alive in practice as well as ethos.

This custom has grown in popularity since World War II, a time when Gypsies were hunted more freely than they had been since the time of the Inquisition, when the Diet of Augsburg changed the laws so that Christians could freely kill Gypsies, not even needing provocation. The initial increase in touring was brought about in the hopes that even if most members of a family were destroyed by the Nazis, at least a few of their younger members might survive to carry on their lineage and their stories.

Once the Holocaust was over, however, this practice continued to gain popularity among the young Romani. Although the original reasons for this practice are still valid, it may be that there are other, secret reasons for this increase. Some of the Phuri Dae claim this rise is linked to the rapidly approaching Convergence; but perhaps there is another explanation entirely.

Whatever the reasons for the increasing number of tours, today when families come together in small groups or at arranged festivals and meetings known as *pakave*, Romani youth will often create their own temporary *kumpania*, or traveling group. Rom who are lazy or prematurely set in their ways have been known to find themselves locked out of the family RV with just a note tacked on a pile of clothes saying: "We'll see you when you get back. Beat it. Baxi (good luck)." Most Romani welcome their first stab at freedom from their parents and various kid siblings, uncles, in-laws, old ones, etc. "If the road sings in your veins, your feet will start a'itchin," as the saying

GOES

When a *kumpania* of youths goes on tour, its members are not expected to do anything in particular except survive. Sure, it would be nice if the group learned something useful along the way, or picked up some really good stories to re-tell later, but it certainly isn't required. Of course, there are also the stories of *kumpaniyi* that were among the chosen of fate. In many Romani tales, members of a *kumpania* play the hand that changes history. Most members of *kumpaniyi* are convinced that they'll be the next group to go down in Romani lore.

While traveling, the *kumpania* must make its own way in the world of the gaje. Although any Rom they meet will allow the group to camp with them a day or two (perhaps even foisting off one of their own fledglings in the process), they are not expected to stay with any one group for more than five days and nights. If they stay longer it is said to bring *prkaza*, bad luck, to all involved.

Besides other Rom, it is also said that any *shilmulo* of the clan known as Gangrel will watch over any members of a *kumpania* who are in the vampire's territory. The reason for this dates back to a time far past, but there is a Romani legend to explain how the Gangrel and the Gypsies first came to an understanding.

Jorsca and the Blood

Jorsca was a very brave man who traveled with his *kumpania*, part of the now-dwindling Zingaresche family. One day Jorsca, who liked to walk by the sea late at night and throw stones as far as he could into the rushing waves, was reaching back to toss a very big stone, when he saw a large wolf walking down the beach toward him. It was a huge black beast, all eyes and fangs, easily as long as Jorsca and twice his size.

Well, Jorsca was no *dulo*, no fool, and he knew he could never reach the safety of his *vardo* before the beast attacked. So Jorsca took the large stone and heaved with all his might, tossing the stone far out into the ocean. By now, the wolf had begun to trot and would reach Jorsca in no time. So Jorsca did what he thought was sensible; he took off his clothes. At this, the wolf stopped, pausing in confusion to snuffle at the discarded garments. Sitting down beside the huge wolf, Jorsca looked into its eyes and saw not a wolf's, but a man's eyes look back.

"Ah, you are either one of the dead or one of the changelings. Either way you can't fool me," Jorsca said.

This so puzzled the wolf, who was actually one of the vampires known as the Gangrel, that he changed to his human form, right there in front of Jorsca.

"If you know so much of my kind, why do you not flee?" he questioned.

"I do not flee because I have no wish to. It is a beautiful night and I wish to be here, where I belong," said Jorsca. "Besides, you would not like my taste. I'm sure I am too rich and powerfully flavored for someone not kin to the Gypsies," he finished with a yawn.

Laughing, the Gangrel told Jorsca that there was no blood too powerful for one as old as he, and that Jorsca could well die this very night, leaving only a feast for the crows.

Laughing in turn, Jorsca took out his knife and turned to the Gangrel, proposing a contest. "You see these two stones sitting beside us? That which runs through my body is more powerful than that which you have borrowed from others. With but a touch of my life's essence, I can dissolve the very rocks themselves. You see, we are so powerful that even the earth gives way before us. In that we are as brothers."

"Impossible," scoffed the Gangrel, taking up the challenge.

Immediately the vampire bit into his own palm and held the rock against the warm liquid. Nothing happened. Then it was Jorsca's turn. Cutting himself with his small knife, Jorsca held the stone tightly in his fist. Opening his hand, he revealed an empty palm. Swearing with fury and surprise, the Gangrel insisted he do the trick again. Sighing in exasperation, Jorsca complied.

All night long this contest went on, with the Gangrel becoming more and more enraged at his own inability to spot Jorsca's trick (for trick it was). In fact, the vampire and Jorsca were so distracted by the contest that neither realized how light it had grown. As the first rays of sun touched the *shilmulo*, he arched in pain. Immediately Jorsca grabbed the vampire and, yelling for aid, rushed him back to his *vardo*. Jorsca's wagon was well-protected from the rays of the sun, and he knew the *shilmulo* would be safe there.

The next night Jorsca and the Gangrel, Lareth, talked until the sun came up. Lareth was so impressed with the Gypsies that he spent much time traveling with Jorsca's kumpania. When he left, Jorsca and Lareth made a pact that neither's people would harm the others, as Jorsca and Lareth had not harmed each other that first night. And so it remains to this day: Gypsy and Gangrel, not friends, but not enemies. And that is not a bad way to be.

Since that time, the Gangrel and Gypsies have made a practice of helping each other when it doesn't conflict with their own interests. At times this help has been great, as when one of the Gangrel vampires rose up at the concentration camp in Glodker, Embracing many members of the Szdano tribe of Romani. The concentration camp was destroyed in the course of one evening, and the rest of the Szdano fled with their newly Embraced fellows.

More recently, a touring kumpania in Mexico managed to distract a pack of werewolves that was about to carve up a Gangrel vampire in Cancún. They slipped the shilmulo out of the restaurant he was treed in by placing him inside a truly ripe (and thoroughly flambéd), roasted whole pig. Sniped the fellow out right past the Garous' twitching muscles. Messy, but it got the job done.

Kumpania in a Chronicle

Many modern kumpani make a practice of stealing vehicles and cruising the countryside, while others tour with a particular band or road show. No small number of kumpani have toured with the Grateful Dead, and Deadheads seem particularly susceptible to the charms of the Romani youth.

Storytellers wishing to design a Gypsy chronicle may want to have the players' characters form a kumpania and go on tour. Such tours can have as little or as much direction as the Storyteller sees fit. Chapter six includes some ideas for stories and chronicles revolving around a kumpania of young Gypsies.

Children of Time

Perhaps the ability to transcend time travels in the Gypsy Blood. Certainly the gifted seers of the Romani view time far differently than anyone else. Some portion of this talent may well be carried by all those of Romani Blood.

One of the stories the Gypsies like to tell as proof that they are the favored of fate takes place at the Crucifixion. The Roman guards were preparing to nail Christ to the cross, and all the people in the swelling crowd, there to witness the event, feared the guards terribly. So the people remained a safe distance from the three crosses, all save one Gypsy boy. This young lad suddenly took it upon himself to sneak past the guards while they were crucifying one of the thieves who was to die with Jesus. When he reached the place where the cross and nails were placed awaiting Christ's crucifixion, the Gypsy boy found he knew what to do.

With the gifts of his kind, the lad stole one of the nails intended for use in the Crucifixion. Looking up to see if the guards had noticed, the young boy saw Christ smiling at him, and in his head, the boy heard whispered words. The words told him that his people would forever be free of the seventh commandment, "Thou shalt not steal," because of his small kindness in easing Jesus' pain.

Although this tale is obviously self-serving, the Gypsies hold it to be just one of many examples of their unique role in history. Regardless of the truth of this and other tales, the Gypsies believe they will play some crucial role in the upcoming Convergence. Which individual Gypsies will be involved or what their role will be is not clear to the Gypsies, but it is of no real concern. Whoever is needed among their people will surely find themselves where they are meant to be, ready to play their part. So why worry about it now?



Chapter Three: The Gypsy

*He deals the cards as a meditation
And those he plays never suspect
He doesn't play for the money he wins
He doesn't play for respect
He deals the cards to find the answer
The sacred geometry of chance
The hidden law of a probable outcome
The numbers lead a dance
— Sting, "Shape Of My Heart"*

This chapter provides specific information on creating Gypsy characters. Although it is possible for Gypsy characters to be other than human — vampire, werewolf or mage — the information below assumes the character being created is a mortal Gypsy. If the character is not a mortal, the points available to spend on the character may vary from those given below. For those who want to create a vampire or werewolf character who is a Gypsy, it would be wise to follow the character generation outline in *Vampires: The Masquerade* or *Werewolf: The Apocalypse*, using the information from *Gypsies* (such as Blood and Luck points and Blood Skills) to modify the character description. However, vampire charac-

ters have some specific limitations, due to their particular nature. For more information on Ravnos vampires, see the information on Ravnos shilmoko in Chapter three and the Ravnos families in Chapter five.

A character creation sheet for Gypsy characters is provided at the back of this book.

Character Creation

As with most "rules" in any of the Storyteller System's games, the procedures presented here are meant as guidelines only. Feel free to play with

Creation Outline

Step One: Character Concept: Who are you?

- Identify Concept: Who are you, and where are you from?
- Choose Family: What Gypsy family is your character from?
- Choose Nature and Demeanor (optional): What is your personality like?
- Choose Element (optional): What is your character's role in her family?

Step Two: Select Attributes: What are your basic capabilities?

Prioritize your three categories: Primary 6, Secondary 4, Tertiary 3.

- Choose Physical Traits: Strength, Stamina & Dexterity
- Choose Social Traits: Charisma, Manipulation & Appearance
- Choose Mental Traits: Perception, Intelligence & Wits.

Step Three: Select Abilities: What do you know?

Prioritize your three categories: Primary 11, Secondary 7, Tertiary 4.

- Choose Talents: Your innate, intuitive Abilities
- Choose Skills: Your trained Abilities
- Choose Knowledges: Abilities you study and memorize

Step Four: Select Advantages: In what ways are you unique?

- Choose Background Traits (5 points)
- Choose Virtues: Conscience, Self Control and Courage (9 points)
- Determine Blood Purity
- Choose Blood Affinities (3 points)

Step Five: Last Touches: Filling in all-important details.

- Record base Willpower = Your Courage rating
- Record base Humanity = Your Conscience + Self Control ratings
- Spend your 21 "Freebie" points to purchase Merits & Flaws, Blood Purity points, Gypsy Blood Traits, Elements and to raise any other Trait

Gypsy Names

Europe

Male: Coron (tchoron), Dimitri, Jorsca (yorska), Lazaros, Petreko, Franjoko, Kostos, Niglo, Jan, Zlato

Female: Baltzar, Dosta, Katina, Makri, Mena, Mrell, Napoana, Richenda, Vana, Zita

Asia and Africa

Male: Alifi, Nasreddin, Jabal, Perun, Shuri, Sinfi

Female: Ayashah, Dalifi, Fatma, Moadel, Najma, Persa, Rena

The Americas

Males: Alexander, Ephraim, Jan, Pepe, Petra, Kiril, Sam (som), Silvanus

Female: Alya, Ellen, Homi, Kata, Maria, Milena, Persa, Lerli, Starlina

these to your heart's content to create the character you want to roleplay (but remember to check any changes with your Storyteller). Do not feel constrained by any simple listing of point totals. If your character should have a greater number of points in one area, or a lesser amount in another, go ahead. What's important is creating a character you find appealing. Be sure to go over this with your Storyteller as well, since it will be her chronicle which will truly bring your character to life (or unlite).

Character Concept

The first thing to decide when creating a character is who that character is. If you haven't already done so, you must determine whether your character is a human, a werewolf or a vampire. This may depend on what type of chronicle your Storyteller is running.

When creating one of the Rom, you should determine the family the character is from. There are numerous Gypsy families, and tribes made up of extended families, in almost all corners of the world. Your character will probably have either been raised in one of the five families mentioned in Chapter two, or at least have joined one of



these families at some point earlier in her life. Gypsies from these families know more than most about the supernatural goings-on in the World of Darkness, and it's a lot more fun to play someone who isn't totally in the dark about the "real" workings of the world.

The families are discussed in greater detail in Chapter five, and you may want to look them over before deciding what clan your character is from. However, players and Storytellers should feel free to make up new families of their own that may be more (or less) knowledgeable than the families detailed in this book. The Gypsies in the World of Darkness are an incredibly rich and diverse culture, and adding more families to the mix only enhances their versatility.

If your character is either a werewolf or vampire, you already know to what family your character currently belongs (Ravnos for a vampire, Lupine for a werewolf). However, you should still decide what family your character was born into, for this will help you determine your character's skills, identity and powers.

Decide whether you want your character to be a European, American, Indian, etc. Did the character's family travel from place to place in a caravan of RVs, Harleys and Jeeps, or were they content to stay in one particular area? How connected were they to the rest of Rom society? How did your character spend her time when she was young? The more details of identity and personality you can determine, the more unique and interesting your character will become.

One of the ways to help determine personality is by choosing a Nature and a Demeanor for your character. Demeanor is the surface personality of the character. It can change from time to time and situation to situation, for your character's Demeanor is the mask she presents to the world. The Rom are particularly likely to shift Demeanors at a moment's notice, and most Gypsies have one Demeanor they show to other Rom and an entirely different Demeanor (or two or three) when dealing with gaje.

The character's Nature is her core personality. Her Nature describes the character's innermost beliefs and philosophy on life. Gypsies will never





show a gaje their true Nature, as gaje are far too untrustworthy to share such intimate information.

Players should also feel free to use any of the Merits or Flaws that apply to mortals found in the core Storyteller books.

Elements

I wake to sleep, and take my waking slow

I feel my fate in what I cannot fear

I learn by going where I have to go

— Theodore Roethke, "The Waking"

When a newborn Romani enters the world, his mother often consults a wise one or mystic to determine whether her child is destined for a particular role in the family. These "birth readings" only give a positive result in perhaps one out of every two or three readings, but if a baby is claimed by one of the five elements (earth, air,

fire, water, or spirit), it's certain that he will be trained in what the Romani feel are compatible skills.

When a mystic performs a birth reading, he takes the babe outside on the first new moon of the child's life. Traditionally, the mystic then places the babe beside a low fire. Next to the fire stand a bowl of cool water, a fan made of feathers, a piece of dark stone such as onyx or hematite, and a black mirror. These five items represent fire, water, air, earth, and spirit, the elements the Rom view as essential to life. Of course, with some of the younger generations of Rom, these elements may be represented by a gas stove, a running faucet, an electric fan, a chunk of brick, and a portable TV tuned to static. As long as the seer is comfortable with the symbols, the ritual will work.

While the baby's parents look on, the seer uses his particular method of evoking the Sight (see Chapter four), be it tarot cards, thrashing, fire



reading, etc. As the seer reaches into the strands of time, one of the elements may reach out and claim the child. Such claimings vary in their intensity, but are unmistakable to anyone watching. For instance, if a baby is claimed by the element of fire, a burning twig may snap and hit the child's foot, leaving a small, but permanent, mark. If the element of spirit claims the child, the baby's eyes may suddenly turn gray as she stares at the shifting screen of the TV. No matter which element claims the child, it will leave some sort of mark on the young one.

If a player decides that his character was claimed by an element during a birth reading, he must then decide which element his character is connected to. Elements definitely confer certain advantages on a character, but they also tend to dictate the course of his life.

All Rom with an Element gain one point in a Blood Affinity in addition to any other Blood Affinities they normally gain during character creation. This holds true even if this gives the Gypsy more Blood Affinities than her Blood Purity score. The exact Affinity gained is determined by the character's particular Element.

An Element can only be chosen during character creation. It costs 7 freebie points, and a character can never be claimed by more than one element.

The five Elements and their meanings are explained below.

Earth

Romani touched by this element are usually the backbone of the family. Often weavers, smiths, and now hackers, these characters are especially skilled at manipulating devices and working at physical tasks. In addition, such characters are adept at recognizing and manipulating patterns of all kinds.

Earth-touched Romani, known as *Dhartime*, may choose from one of the following Blood Affinities: Instinct or the Draba form of Gypsy magic.

At any time, *Dhartime* may also spend two points of Willpower to heal or fix one level of damage. This healing skill applies to both living creatures and machines, and reflects the Rom's heightened ability to manipulate physical patterns. It requires an entire turn.

Air

These are the Rom who most easily glide among the gaje. Such Rom move effortlessly through gaje cities, breezing in with nothing and coming out with more gaje loot than they can carry. Such Gypsies are often thieves, gamblers and con-artists, relying on their wits and abilities to reap what others have sown.

Air-touched Gypsies, known as *Jhanaki*, may choose from one of the following Blood Affinities: Luck or Truth of the Rom.

Jhanaki may choose to spend two points of Willpower to negate any one success by an opponent (living or mechanical). This power reflects the *Jhanaki*'s ability to escape even the worst scrapes intact.

Fire

These Rom are always gifted warriors. Throughout time those Rom marked by fire have fought to keep the ways of their people alive.

Fire-seared Rom, known as *Kuyan*, always receive the Affinity known as the Dance of Knives.

At any time *Kuyan* may choose to spend two points of Willpower to ignore two wound levels. Thus, a *Kuyan* who is wounded (-3) may choose to will his pain to lessen by spending two points of Willpower so that he can function as if he was only hurt (-1). The *Kuyan* may even function when he would normally be incapacitated, though he can still die, and he can spend as much Willpower as he desires. This effect lasts for the duration of a scene.

Water

These Rom are known for their mastery of both words and body. Performers by nature, the cleverest tale spinners and most graceful acrobats often are those claimed by this element.

Water-claimed Rom are known as *Jastima*. A *Jastima* may choose from the following Affinities: Truth of the Rom or Zapaderin.

Jastima may choose to spend two points of Willpower in order to decrease the effective Willpower of any gaje watching or listening to the *Jastima* by one. This decrease is a general effect, and applies to all of the gaje's rolls. The gaje's Willpower is affected for one entire scene.

Spirit

Such Gypsies are the rarest of the claimed. These Rom are known for their long memories, and the Blood always seems to run strong among such folk. Blessed with at least a small amount of magic, these Gypsies have a remarkable understanding of human nature and the true consequences of people's actions. Many of these Rom become the wise ones of their families, while others become matchmakers or historians, committing tremendous amounts of knowledge to memory.

Spirit-kissed Rom are called *Satarma*. *Satarma* may choose their special Affinity from any of the four types of Roman Magic.

Satarma may spend two points of Willpower to temporarily increase their skill in any form of magic by one point. This increase lasts for one scene, and it can even enable a *Satarma* to increase her ability above her Blood Purity level. Although this effect is not cumulative, a *Satarma* may use another two points of Willpower to increase a second magical specialty (if she has one) during the same scene.

Select Abilities

The character has learned her Abilities over the course of her lifetime. Abilities are assigned a rating from one to five, with higher ratings equaling greater skill. Abilities are divided into Talents, Skills and Knowledges.

Talents are intuitive abilities which we all have to one degree or another. They do not need to be practiced often, and cannot be learned through study or tutoring. They are most often gained through experience.

Skills are learned through rigorous training and practice. Skills can be taught and studied (unlike Talents). Skills always require step-by-step learning.

Knowledges include Abilities that require the rigorous application of the mind. Knowledges are acquired through experience, contemplation, argument, and careful study. Education of all kinds results in Knowledge.



The player must decide which of these three categories of Abilities is of primary, secondary and tertiary importance to the character. Human characters may spend the following number of points on Abilities

Primary: 11

Secondary: 7

Tertiary: 4

A complete listing of various Abilities can be found in the *Vampire*, *Mage* and *Werewolf* books and *Players Guides*. Gypsies may have any of the Abilities open to humans, but the following Abilities are particularly appropriate to Gypsy characters

Acrobatics, Acting, Astrology, Bribery, Dancing, Escapology, Faerie Lore, Fast-Talk, Gambling, Hagglng, Herbalism, Hypnotism, Kindred Lore, Lupine Lore, Magus Lore, Occult, Seduction, Sleight of Hand, Spirit Lore, Style, Ventriloquism

In addition to the Abilities described in these books, there are also several new Abilities normally available only to Gypsy characters. These Abilities are passed down from parent to child, and the information is jealously guarded by the Rom. Although some of the Skills, such as Drinking, are not limited to the Gypsies, no true member of the Rom will teach a gaje the particular Roman secrets of the trade

New Skills

Bujo

You have learned the true art of the well planned swindle. The bujo involves convincing people to freely give you their money and valuables so that you can aid them in "cleansing their souls" or "removing their bad luck." It is the mark of a true artist to be able to pull off a successful bujo

This Skill involves establishing some sort of fortune-telling business and then tricking clients into giving large sums of money to your character. (An example of this is given in Chapter two.) Characters with this Skill can raise a sum of money equal to \$5,000 times the number of successes on a Wits + Bujo roll against the target's Wits + 4. The character must spend at least one week per \$5,000 desired priming his mark for the swindle.

A botch indicates the character's swindle has been discovered by the mark. The results of a botch vary from the mark's leaving in a huff with all his money to being raided by the police while the character is in the middle of making the final switch.

- **Novice:** Can get change for the subway.
- **Practiced:** Telemarketer.
- **Competent:** Sweet little old ladies are just dying to give you their money.
- **Expert:** Televangelists give money to you.
- **Master:** Could convince an M.D. that the cure for cancer involves giving you all his worldly goods.

Diversion

You have learned the art of directing the attention of others where you wish it to be. Sometimes all eyes are drawn to you by even your subtlest gesture, while at other times your glance causes those around you to look elsewhere. You find that when you control the attention of those around you, all sorts of opportunities present themselves to you and your companions.

This Skill enables a character to direct the attention of those around her. This Skill is similar to Sleight of Hand, except on a far greater scale. This Skill is most often used by one Rom to draw attention to herself while her partner takes advantage of a mark's sudden inattention to her merchandise. It is also invaluable to those who wish to leave an awkward scene without attracting attention to themselves. The character's Diversion number of dice should be added to any Manipulation rolls made involving distracting others.

- **Novice:** Look! It's God illa!

- **Practiced:** Can move through crowds unnoticed.
- **Competent:** Proficient at three-card monte.
- **Expert:** Can manipulate the attention of whole crowds.
- **Master:** People see what you want them to see.

Drinking

You have learned through hard experience, how to hold your liquor. You are now able to drink a large amount of alcohol without having it impair your abilities much at all. This comes in handy in all sorts of situations, from getting information out of the local biker gang to drinking your latest gaje friend (and benefactor) under the table and then helping yourself to the money you're sure he was about to lend you.

Characters with this Skill are able to drink large quantities of alcohol without becoming impaired. The character's Drinking rating should be added to all Stamina rolls involving alcohol consumption.

- **Novice:** You can make it through a bottle of wine.
- **Practiced:** Bar regular.
- **Competent:** Frat house champ.
- **Expert:** Norm!!
- **Master:** Can out-drink a fish.

Fortune-Telling

When it comes to gazing into crystal balls, making tables rise and rolling your eyes back in your head, you know your stuff. The gaje eat this junk up, even though it doesn't have a thing to do with real magic or the Sight. But it's a good way to get information and money out of the gullible, and anyone who falls for these tricks needs to be taught a lesson!

This Skill is simply the ability to convince others that your character knows how to tell fortunes, read palms, etc. Characters with this Skill can set up a fortune-telling business and make some money at it. Additionally, characters can add their Fortune-Telling dice to their Manipulation rating when attempting to gain information from one of their clients.



- **Novice:** You can make your way around a tarot deck
- **Practiced:** You look convincing muttering into a crystal ball and have the "tall, dark stranger" bit down pat
- **Competent:** You are very familiar with all the major fortune-telling devices and how to employ them
- **Expert:** You are able to use many different fortune-telling devices, and are practiced at telling people what they want to hear
- **Master:** You could convince the Uncanny Danny that you're the real thing

Storytelling

You are able to weave a web of language that can keep your audience entertained for hours on end. You have whiled away many an evening spinning your tales and sagas to others of your kind as well as the gaje. You are held in high esteem by your fellow Rom for your clever tongue and keen wit.

Characters with this ability are able to tell interesting and entertaining tales. This Skill is highly prized among the Rom, and any Gypsy who can tell a good story will most certainly find herself plied with warm food, cold drink and a comfortable place to sleep.

- **Novice:** Can tell a short joke
- **Practiced:** Know how to deliver a punchline
- **Competent:** Invited to many parties
- **Expert:** Can keep an audience awake all night
- **Master:** Qualified to run Vampire

The Talith

You have learned how to use the Roman weapon known as the talith. The talith is a heavy scarf, or *diklo*, of some 5-6' in length, with weighted hooks and barbs along each end. You can use the talith to disarm your opponents, or you can attack them, slashing with the barbed hooks. The advantage of reach combined with its concealability make this weapon one of your favorite forms of attack.

A character must be skilled in melee in order to learn this specialized form of combat. The

talith is a difficult weapon to master. It requires good coordination and a lot of practice. Although it does not do much damage compared to a tin arm, the talith is practically impossible to detect as a weapon, and it can be used to blind or disarm opponents. The greater the character's Skill with the Talith, the more varied the special maneuvers and attacks of which the character is capable.

- **Novice:** Can blind opponent, giving her a +1 target modifier.
- **Practiced:** Can use talith as an actual melee weapon.
- **Competent:** Can use talith to disarm opponents. Opponent must then make a Strength roll (difficulty 6). If the Rom rolls more successes on a Dexterity + Talith roll (difficulty 6) than her adversary she successfully disarms him.
- **Expert:** Can use the talith as a second weapon in melee (two attacks per action). However, all difficulty numbers are raised by +1.
- **Master:** Can entangle opponent with talith. Opponent must make a Dexterity roll (difficulty 6) to avoid entanglement. If the Rom has more successes she successfully entangles her opponent, causing him to lose his next action.

New Knowledge

Romany Lore

You are knowledgeable in the lore of your people, the Rom. You have listened with care to all the old tales, and can recount the history and legends of your people.

This skill reflects the character's Knowledge of the position Gypsies hold in the world, of the Seeds of Knowledge, and of their role as wildcards in the upcoming Convergence. The higher the character's rating, the greater her Knowledge of such secrets.

- **Novice:** You've sat through a few of grandma's stories.
- **Practiced:** You know the mundane history of the Rom.



- **Competent:** Have heard of the Seeds of Knowledge and Daenna
- **Expert:** Know of the true power of the Blood of the Rom
- **Master:** Have heard all the tales and understand the Rom's role in history

Advantages

Advantages are not given priority levels as are Abilities and Attributes. Instead, your character receives a certain number of points to assign within each category. Like vampires, Gypsy characters can assign points to their Backgrounds and Virtues. In addition, Gypsy characters have a third advantage known as Blood Purity

Backgrounds

Backgrounds are special resources available to the character, representing such things as temporal power and connections to other Rom. Human characters receive 5 points to spend on Backgrounds. The Background traits given here are

open to all human Gypsy characters. As detailed in any of the basic Storyteller books, certain Background traits are only available to vampires (Ravnos), werewolves (Lupine), or mages (see Chapter three). See the appropriate book for information on these traits and more details on most of the traits listed below

Allies

Allies are normally members of the character's family. However, it is not uncommon for Gypsies from other families to be counted as Allies of the character. These Allies are people whom the character trusts and can count on in times of need. However, it is rare that the Allies will risk themselves to save the character, unless the Allies are very close kin

Contacts

Gypsy Contacts are usually members of a city's underworld. Often these are the only gate with





whom a Gypsy maintains ties. Contacts may also be influential members of the Rom themselves, particularly elders and those with powerful magic.

Fame

For a Gypsy character, Fame has a double edge. Fame earns a Gypsy respect among fellow Rom, but she may also be known to certain gaje police departments and other authorities that the Gypsy would rather avoid. Fame can also represent the Gypsy's role as an entertainer. Many Gypsies have become famous through their skill at entertaining others.

Resources

Although Gypsies do not tend to have much in the way of Resources, when they do, their funds often come from sources outside of the mainstream economy. Gypsies do not usually keep much money, preferring to spend freely. Similarly, Gypsies do not tend to value possessions as do the gaje. Possessions come and go when they are needed.

New Background

Talismans

You possess one or more magical talismans, precious pieces of draba created by a skilled drabarme. There are a wide array of draba available to Gypsies, and lucky for you, you found someone who parted with one of the valued items, or you found a drabarme to create one for you. Draba are very valuable to the Rom because of their varied powers and because they are only usable by those who possess the Blood. The greater your score in this Background, the more valuable the draba you possess. You can possess a number of levels of draba equal to your score in this Background. You may possess more than one piece of draba, dividing your score among the draba you possess. Draba are more fully explained in Chapter four.

- You possess talismans worth one level of draba.
- You possess talismans worth two levels of draba.

- You possess talismans worth three levels of draba
- You possess talismans worth four levels of draba
- You possess talismans worth five levels of draba.

Virtues

Human Gypsies have nine points to spend on Virtues (Courage, Self-Control, and Conscience). Gypsy characters have a greater number of points to spend on Virtues than most mortals, due to the Gypsies' inherent connection to the universal life force flowing through their veins. This connection is part of the genetic inheritance Daenna bequeathed to her children.

Blood Purity

All Gypsies begin with one point of Blood Purity. Additional points of Blood Purity can only be gained by spending Freebie points. Blood Purity reflects the connection a Gypsy has to the Blood of Daenna flowing in her veins. Although a "full-Blooded" Gypsy is more likely to have a high Blood Purity score, it is entirely possible that even a Gypsy with only one parent of partial Gypsy lineage could have as high a score. This is possible because such a "marginal" Gypsy might have a more intense connection to the magic in her Blood than a diffident, full-Blooded Gypsy. However, it is rare for Gypsies of less than one quarter "pure" Blood (descended from Daenna) to have a Blood Purity score higher than two.

It is the Blood that makes Gypsies Rom. Blood Purity is valued by all Gypsies; however its most important effect is in the magical abilities and Blood Affinities it gives to many of the Rom.

Even Gypsies with no magical powers value Blood Purity highly, for their number of Blood Purity dice is added to all rolls when using any Blood Affinities. Their Blood also grants the Rom group power. Gypsies are sometimes able to aid their fellows through the strength of their Blood. The more powerful an individual Rom's Blood, the more help she is in such workings. (See Chapter four for more information on group power.)

Blood Purity also limits the number of Blood Affinities a Gypsy can attain. A Gypsy may only

have a number of Affinities equal to his Blood Purity score. If his Blood Purity increases over time as a result of honing his connection to his heritage, the Gypsy may then learn another Blood Affinity.

The only problem with having a high level of Blood Purity is that gaje feel uneasy around truly powerful Rom. The stronger the Blood sings in the veins of a Rom, the stronger the gaje's aversion. Such an aversion manifests itself in a variety of responses, ranging from avoidance and hesitancy in trusting the Gypsy, to outright hatred and even murder. The reaction depends on both the circumstances and the individuals involved.

- You qualify as a true member of the Rom . . . barely. Your first Social roll involving a particular gaje is made at +1 difficulty. You can have one Blood Affinity.
- You probably have at least one full-Blooded Romani grandparent, and you are aware of the power that flows in your veins. You can have two Blood Affinities.
- The Blood flows strongly in your veins. Your first social interactions involving gaje are made at +2 difficulty. The difficulty of all Romani Social rolls are reduced by 1. You can have three Blood Affinities.
- You can feel the Blood sing in your veins, and you have learned how to channel its power with great facility. You can have four Blood Affinities.
- You are as in tune with the harmonies of the Blood as Daenna herself. All initial social interactions involving gaje are made at +3 difficulty and future rolls are made at +1 difficulty. All social interactions with Romani receive a -2 to difficulty level (minimum 3). You can have up to five Blood Affinities.

Blood Affinities

The abilities below can only be used by the Rom, as they require the special magic that flows within Gypsy Blood. So although a gaje may learn the moves of a dance or the words of a song, he will not be able to produce the effect that a Gypsy can. Despite this, the Rom do not consider such powers



to be true magic, thinking of them as simply gifts of their Blood. When using these special talents, a Gypsy rolls Blood Purity + (Talent Rating) to determine success. During character creation Gypsies receive 3 points to spend on Blood Affinities.

The Freebie cost of these abilities is listed on the chart below. After the initial character creation process, these special abilities may only improve with experience and Storyteller permission.

Dance of Knives

You have mastered the ancient Romani art of fighting from the soul. As you move your body to the rhythm of your Blood, your knives become an extension of your body, and thus of your Blood. When performing the Dance, you move at speeds far beyond your normal capabilities, and your body and knives combine in a lethal whirlwind of motion.

This skill combines the beauty of dance with the violence of combat. Gypsies with this ability use the power of their Blood to fall into a trance-like state, in which they become extremely efficient fighting machines. The dancer may either use her knives and feet in hand-to-hand combat, or she may hurl her knives at a more distant opponent. The character's rating in this skill equals the number of attacks possible in a turn, so a character with a rating of three could attack up to three times in one turn. This also means that a character with only one dot in the Dance of Knives attacks normally. The first dot merely represents the initial learning of the movements. True mastery comes at higher levels.

Due to the tremendous difficulty of the Dance of Knives, the character's rating in this skill may never exceed her Blood Purity.

Instinct

You always seem to know when to look over your shoulder and when not to take that shortcut through the dark alley. When you get a bad feeling about someone, it really means something, and you sometimes notice things that don't seem important at the time, but end up being critical.

This talent is a mild form of "sixth sense." Characters with this Affinity add their Instinct

rating to any rolls regarding the character's personal safety. The Storyteller may even wish to roll the character's Instinct dice in situations where a strong danger exists but the character has no normal way to detect this. In such cases Instinct + Perception should be rolled (difficulty of 8). If the roll is successful, the character should get a bad feeling about the situation. This would range from feeling "funny" about a person who means to bilk the character out of her money to not wanting to start a car wired to explode.

If a roll is botched, the Storyteller should give the character some misleading information. (Botches work much better when the Storyteller makes the Instinct roll). For example, if the character is deciding which alley to run down to avoid the pack of angry thugs she just swindled, the character would get a bad feeling about the alley that leads to a clean getaway. Whoops.

This Affinity only works in regard to the character herself and is not added to rolls where the character is not in any personal danger.

- **Novice:** You generally have an umbrella with you when it rains.
- **Practiced:** You never get cold-cocked in a fight.
- **Competent:** Good private eye material.
- **Expert:** You never answer the phone when a creditor calls.
- **Master:** Jungle predators could learn from you.

Luck

Ever since you were small you've been able to get out of even the roughest scrapes. It seems like whenever you really need it, the dice roll in your favor, the man looks the other way, or she believes your excuse about that flat tire.

This talent enables the character to add an extra die or two to a dice pool when she decides things look really bad. However, each Luck die can only be used once per story. So, if the character has three points of Luck she might use one point (die) early on to win at gambling, but then she only has two Luck dice to use when she's confronted by three angry bouncers at the club.

- **Novice:** You find pennies on sidewalks.

- **Practiced:** You can always find a parking spot.
- **Competent:** You would have been kicked off the Titanic *before* it set sail.
- **Expert:** You've been thrown out of a lot of casinos.
- **Master:** Compared to you, James Bond is one unlucky guy.

Magic

There are four different types of magical skills peculiar to the Rom. Each one of these is a unique skill, although some powerful mages have more than one gift at their disposal. No Gypsy can acquire any magical skill at a rating greater than that of her Blood Purity score. The magic of the Rom is explored in detail in Chapter four, but the four types of magic are described briefly here.

Evil Eye: This ability allows the Gypsy to place or remove curses upon victims of her choosing.

The Sight: Gypsies with the Sight can gain insights into both the recent past and possibilities of the future.

Mediumship: The ability to contact the spirit world.

Draba: The ability to create magical devices such as charms, potions and amulets.

Truth of the Rom

You are an extremely sincere person. You always tell the truth no matter who you are talking to — even when you speak to a gaje. You seem to be able to convince even yourself of the *real* truth of any situation, regardless of those seeming "facts" others speak of.

This ability enables a Rom to lie truthfully. In other words, the character is such a good liar that he even believes himself (while telling the "truth"). This is not to say that the character doesn't realize what actually happened, but just that he pushes the information so far back in his mind that, when necessary, even he doesn't remember it. This enables the character to beat any sort of lie detector, Empathy Talent, or shrewd cop. Whenever the character attempts a lie, each point of this talent subtracts one success from the target's Perception roll. So if the character has two points in Truth of

the Rom, someone using a lie detection device would need at least three successes to detect any deception at all

- **Novice:** Can manage simple yes/no situations
- **Practiced:** Can call in sick with conviction
- **Competent:** Can get through an LAPD interrogation
- **Expert:** Able to pass a lie detector test with flying colors
- **Master:** Even Mom believes the dog ate your homework.

Zapaderin

You have learned the rhythmic motions, intricate patterns and fluid gestures of the mesmerizing dance known as Zapaderin. When you perform this dance, all those not of the Blood soon come under the spell of your grace, the trance of the rhythm. This mesmerizing dance requires constant practice and discipline, which you have in full measure

A character with this skill is able to cause anyone not of Romani Blood to become mesmerized. Unlike hypnotism, this skill does not require a willing target. However, watchers are not completely powerless. If a character can perform this dance for at least 10 minutes, she causes anyone watching to fall into a state in which they become far more compliant and agreeable to suggestions. The effective Willpower of those watching the dance falls by one for every success the character rolls on an Appearance + Zapaderin roll (difficulty 6). This effect lasts for as long as the character dances

- **Novice:** Can perform the dance without any blatant errors
- **Practiced:** People love to watch you move
- **Competent:** You make bellydancers jealous
- **Expert:** When you dance all eyes are on you
- **Master:** Salome, eat your heart out!

Last Touches

It is now time to spend your Freebie points. Human characters have 21 such points to spend. The cost per dot to raise the various Traits is listed below.

- Attributes: 5
- Blood Purity: 4
- Elements: 7
- Blood Affinities: 3
- Abilities: 2
- Virtues: 2
- Willpower: 1
- Humanity: 1
- Backgrounds: 1

This takes care of your character's basic statistics. Of course, a bunch of numbers on a sheet of paper is still a long way from a fully fleshed character. Once the bare bones of the character are down on paper, the player should think about the character's personality, goals, needs, and interests. It is also a good idea for the Storyteller and player to get together and make some decisions about what defining events have shaped the character, before the chronicle even begins



Chapter Four: The Magic

*Didn't know what time it was, the lights were blue
I leaned back on my radio
Some cat was layin' down some rock'n' roll ultra
soul, he said
Then the loud sound did seem to fade
Came back like a slow voice on a wave of phase
That weren't no DJ that was hazy cosmic jive
— David Bowie, "Starman"*

Magic Among The Rom

While many Gypsies are not gifted with the Sight or other esoteric abilities, magic is an acknowledged part of any Gypsy's life. It has long been known that many Gypsies possess the ability to catch glimpses of both the past and the future, or to give an enemy bad luck with merely a glance. Some Gypsies can speak with the dead while others can cast spells. Certain clans maintain their own, specialized abilities, while others have rejected (or have lost) potential possessed by most of their race.

Of course this does not mean that your average Joe who stops by his local fortune-telling shop to speak to his dear-departed aunt, or ducks into Madame Eva's tent at the Gypsy carnival to have his palm read, is going to be the beneficiary of true Gypsy magic. Even if his chosen Gypsy consultant has a real gift, she may not strain herself by using it to aid a mere gaje. Of course she might, but don't hold your breath waiting.

Young Gypsies usually discover their talents early in life. Just as they notice developing physical and mental talents, the child's parents will inevitably be watching for any signs of potential magical talent in their youngster. The Phuri Dar go so far as to elaborately test each child, and have

evolved a number of games that aim to bring latent talent to the surface. No matter how or when talent is discovered, a child so gifted will normally be taught to use that talent for the benefit of herself, her family and all Romani.

Magic specific to the Rom can be grouped into four distinct abilities or talents. While some Gypsies possess more than one of these abilities, the majority of talented Gypsies possess (or at least focus upon) only one particular talent.

Some Gypsies also have other psychic abilities, such as telekinesis (the ability to move objects through thought alone) or the ability to travel astrally. Although these are true talents and those Gypsies who possess them are encouraged to develop their psychic abilities, these abilities are not specific to the Gypsies and are not granted by the Blood. Since these abilities are not granted by the Blood they cannot be "boosted" by a gathering of Gypsies.

Only human characters may have these abilities, known as Numina. More information on psychic abilities and other Numina can be found in *The Hunters Hunted* and *The Vampire Players Guide Second Edition*.

Ravnos Shilmulo and The Blood

Although most Ravnos Gypsies are human, a small percentage of such Gypsies have received the eternal Embrace, or *tumnumos*. Such Gypsies become vampires. For those Ravnos so changed, the very process of becoming shilmulo strips the Gypsy of that which truly made her a Gypsy: the Blood. This has profound physical and psychological effects on a Gypsy who possessed magical abilities or any Blood Affinities.

With the draining of the Blood, the Gypsy forever loses her Blood-given abilities, even as she gains immortality. The change from human to vampire means devastating loss for any so affected, but for those with the power, the loss of magical senses is especially difficult. It is not possible to be a vampire and to maintain any of the Blood Affinities or any human magical abilities whatsoever (including Numina). All are forfeited with the change.

Paradox and the Rom

Although Gypsies are considered Awakened beings, the vast majority of Rom suffer no Paradox effects. Although Gypsies have an extraordinarily flexible view of reality compared to most people, they still believe the universe functions under a series of fixed laws that the Gypsies cannot alter (sidestep, yes, but alter, no). Their magic operates under fixed laws, and is considered "hedge magic" by true mages.

There are, however, a few Gypsies who have both the power of their Romani Blood and the power of an Awakened Avatar available to them. Such Rom are few in number, but are among the most innately gifted of all mages. These mages can manipulate reality with far more freedom than their brethren, however, they are also subject to the effects of Paradox. Any fully Awakened Gypsy mage is open to the effects of Paradox even when using these skills, although all traditional Gypsy magic is considered coincidental magic. Their Avatars are awakened, and thus they are always vulnerable to the possibility of gaining Paradox. It is a price they pay for their greatly increased abilities.

Players who wish to create Gypsies who are also full mages should consult *Mage: The Ascension* and *Ascension's Right Hand* for more information on creating mage characters.

However, a Gypsy shilmulo does retain the knowledge of how to utilize any such abilities. As explained in *The Vampire Players Guide*, when a vampire drinks from a mortal with psychic abilities, she may be unable to control the ability as long as she maintains the "psychic" blood in her vampiric body. For example, if a vampire sips from a telekinetic, she may notice objects hurtling uncontrollably around her at the most inconvenient times. The same holds true for any vampire who drinks from a Gypsy with the Sight or any other ability: The talent may manifest itself uncontrollably while the vitae is in the vampire's body.

The only exception to this inability to control a psychic or Blood talent is a Ravnos who once had that particular ability. A Ravnos who, as a mortal, possessed, say, the Sight, may once again have use of the Sight while the seer's Blood flows in her veins. Many Ravnos who discover this peculiarity of the Blood travel closely with members of their human kin, just as they did while alive, in order to have a fresh supply of Romani Blood available to them. While some Ravnos families accept the shilmulo into their kumpania, most Gypsies will do everything in their power to avoid becoming part of a Ravnos vampire's special Gypsy Herd.

Some Ravnos shilmulo apparently find Romani Blood too heady and intoxicating to resist. There are tales of Ravnos vampires who, having discovered this quirk of the Blood, became hunters of their own people, searching out and even killing their fellow Rom in order to feel the echo of their lost Romani power and heritage flowing through their veins. Of course, in violating his family thus, the vampire slips ever-further from the brother

hood of his past. He is left only with the teasing, echo of his former self; the mocking reminder of his former humanity.

In practice, a Ravnos vampire may use any of his former Blood-given abilities only while Gypsy Blood remains in his body. It costs one Blood Point to activate a nascent power. Once activated, the ability is available to the character for the duration of the particular scene. Blood Points drunk from a Romani are, of course, also used normally by the vampire as well. The character may not "hoard" the Gypsy Blood Points for use in activating his former abilities. Blood Points are always used up in the order they are acquired.

Group Power

The Blood of the Gypsies makes the Rom different from the other humans roaming the land. The Rom are so conscious of this distinction that they do not speak of Blood unless they are only among fellow Rom and the matter is important. The Blood of Daenna and the power of the



Fruit of the Tree of Knowledge sing within each Rom to a greater or lesser degree, but it is always there. Many older Gypsies claim to be able to identify a fellow Rom from a half-mile away or farther, simply by observing the way he walks.

The Blood sings not just to the individual Rom herself, but to all others of her kind. This connection is strengthened when Gypsies band together, until the air around a large gathering of Rom fairly crackles and hums with energy. It may be this aura which makes the gaze so leery of Gypsies, especially those with true power.

Long ago, the Rom discovered that the magical energies of their Blood could be combined and channeled into a tool of even greater power when focused through a single Rom. It is said that the first group of Rom to do this had been chased high into the Turkish countryside by a group of Turks bent on the destruction of Gypsies in general, and the destruction of these Gypsies in particular. Higher and higher the kumpania fled, until its members reached the heights of Mount Ararat itself. Exhausted and injured, their trail marked by footprints of Blood, the five Gypsies stumbled into a small cave, too tired to go farther. Behind and below them, the sound of clattering hooves broadcast their approaching doom.

Then it was that Kordin, a Gypsy skilled in the Dance of the Knives, told the others of his kumpania he would try to dance, although every muscle in his body screamed in pain and he had only his eating dagger with which to fight. Rising to their feet, the four remaining members of Kordin's kumpania gathered around him and whispered words of encouragement. As Kordin prepared to leave the cave, Zerba, the eldest of the group and Kordin's lover, grasped his dagger by the blade, coating it with her own Blood. So doing, Zerba told Kordin to carry the strength of her Blood as well as his own into combat. Each of the remaining kumpania members followed Zerba, blooding the blade and swearing their strength. Kordin too, joined in this Blood oath, swearing his allegiance to his kumpania. As he did so, Kordin could feel a heady mixture of power and fierce joy rise up within himself. Leaving the cave and his kumpania, Kordin awaited the Turks.

From that battle between one Gypsy and 20 Turks, not one Turk returned. Never before was

the Dance of Knives performed with such deadly skill and grace. Kordin himself always maintained he could remember nothing of the battle, save his own voice singing "The Fatted Pig and Two Tuns of Wine," a Romani fire song of joy.

Thus, it is said, the ability of the Blood to augment itself through the use of Blood Foci was first discovered.

Blood Foci

Gypsies are able to temporarily increase the capabilities of any Blood Affinity in one of their members. In order to do so, the Gypsies must each, in turn, shed their own Blood onto some object the targeted Rom will carry while she uses her now-supplemented Affinity. Whoever is the focus of the Blood oath must be the last Gypsy to add her Blood to the object. Such objects are typically knives, needles or other piercing instruments, but Blood swearings have also been done on objects ranging from the Gypsy's torn T-shirt to a computer mouse.

In game terms, each participating Rom must spend one point of Willpower as he adds at least a few drops of his own Blood in order to join in the Blood swearing. Once all participating Rom have added their Blood (and Willpower) to the object, the Gypsy using the combined power must add his own Blood and Willpower to the Focus. The Blood Focus adds to the power of any Blood Affinity, whether it is Zapaderin or the Evil Eye.

In practice, the Blood Focus will aid the Gypsy with any one Blood Affinity for the duration of a scene. The amount of aid the Focus provides depends on the combined number of Blood Purity dots the participating Gypsies (including the Gypsy using the Focus) possess. For every three Blood Purity points possessed by the participating Gypsies, the Gypsy using the Focus gains an automatic success for that scene. The Gypsy with the Focus may use these automatic successes every time she uses the chosen Blood Affinity for the duration of the scene. She can choose how many of the automatic successes she will use on any given test, however, just as when using Willpower, she must declare the number of successes used before she rolls.



Blood Purity Points	Automatic Successes
1-3	1
4-6	2
7-9	3
10-12	4
13-15	5

If enough Blood Purity points have been directed into the Focus, the augmented power of an Affinity can be truly awesome. However, such Focus must be used before the Blood on the Focus dries. In typical conditions this means the Gypsy must begin using her specified Blood Affinity within 15 minutes of the creation of the Focus.

For example, let's say a kumpania of five young Gypsies is trapped inside a burning punk club, thanks to a gang of neo-Nazi arsonists. The members of the kumpania quickly realize that they are in deep trouble, as they are eight floors up and the stairways are already ablaze. Confering quickly,

the group decides its best bet is to create a Blood Focus centered on Day Spinner, a Gypsy with the Affinity of Instinct, in the hopes that with the added power of their combined Blood, he can spy some way out of their current death trap.

Passing around Day Spinner's switchblade, the Rom quickly add their Blood (and Willpower) to the blade. The breakdown of Blood Purity is as follows: Julia has 3 dots of Blood Purity, Jordan has 1, Indigo has 4, Laughing Boy has 3, and Day Spinner has 2. Adding these numbers up ($3+1+4+3+3=14$), the Gypsies find they can give Day Spinner five automatic successes on his Instinct rolls.

Once the Blood Focus has been primed, Day Spinner goes into action, searching his surroundings for the best way out. Day Spinner's player declares he's throwing three successes into this test. He then makes an Instinct roll (Instinct + Perception) against a difficulty of 7, achieving only one success. Luckily for Day Spinner and his



kumpania, Day Spinner's player added in three successes, for a total of four successes. The Storyteller decides this is enough for Day Spinner to notice the old dumbwaiter hidden behind a half-collapsed section of roof, still in place from when the building was a hotel. The Storyteller tells Day Spinner's player that the dumbwaiter is so far untouched by the fire, but that it might not be that way for long.

Making another Instinct roll, the player declares he is throwing the remaining two successes into the roll. Day Spinner rolls two more successes + his two automatic successes, for a total of four successes. The Storyteller tells Day Spinner that he feels the dumbwaiter is the way to go. Now cramming in two at a time, the characters manage to get to the basement and out one of the windows without getting toasted. Of course there are still those psycho-Nazis to deal with.

In theory, there is no limit to the number of Gypsies who can add the support of their Blood to a Blood Focus. This fact may be one of the reasons the Gypsies have been so persecuted. It is likely that at least certain of the more knowledgeable mages and elder vampires, in particular elders of the Verbena tradition and Ravnos clan, know of this additive peculiarity of Gypsy Blood. Such individuals also are sure to recognize the amazing power a large group of pure Gypsies could focus through one of their members, and would wish to take steps to neutralize such a potential threat.

As a side note, it is unlikely that any of the Tremere yet recognize the power of Gypsy vitae, as there is no evidence of any persecution by this group of shilmulo. Given their penchant for blood magic, they would surely attempt to control the Gypsies and place the Rom in their Herds.

The Sight

*I'm hearing right and wrong so clearly
There must be something more than this
It's only in uncertainty
That we're naked and alive*

Peter Gabriel, "That Voice Again"

When the gaje think of a Gypsy, they often picture a shriveled old woman wrapped in a shawl cackling over palms and muttering vague-yet

ominous prophesies of the client's future. Or they imagine a voluptuous young woman with raven hair and colorful skirts staring into a crystal ball and speaking of tall, dark and handsome strangers that will soon be knocking on the client's door. It's true that Gypsies often adopt these stereotypical roles when attempting to gain as much money as they possibly can from their target. However, when a Gypsy with the true gift of Sight uses her ability, the results can be truly powerful — and sometimes frightening.

A Gypsy with the Sight does not have complete control over all aspects of this ability. She is not always able to step out of the linear timeline in which we function to gain insight into both the future and the past. Both disciplined concentration and relaxation are imperative for the successful use of this Affinity. When attempting to use the Sight, a Gypsy normally favors one or two particular fortune-telling (or *dukkerin*) methods. Some of the most common methods of fortune-telling are listed below. A Gypsy with the Sight greatly values any and all of her fortune-telling tools, be they tarot decks, dice, crystals, etc. Normally, a Sighted Gypsy will carry her tools wrapped in silk, and will allow no other to touch her tools for fear the contact will somehow make them *marhume* (impure) and therefore less likely to impart true visions.

For characters with the Sight, players must choose either one of the major methods of Seeing or two of the minor methods of divination, or make up another that her character favors. If a character is forced to use a *dukkerin* method she is not trained in, or does not have her favored dice, tarot cards, etc., available, the difficulty level of any attempt at using her Sight to look into the past or future is increased by +2.

When a character attempts to use the Sight during a story, the Storyteller should ask the player what information the character is seeking. This could range from a general reading about the health of an individual to the specific ramifications of some action. The base difficulty level when using the Sight is 8. A character attempting to determine whether a particular building will be empty for the next few hours might have to roll against a difficulty of 8. Let's say people are going

The Threads of Time

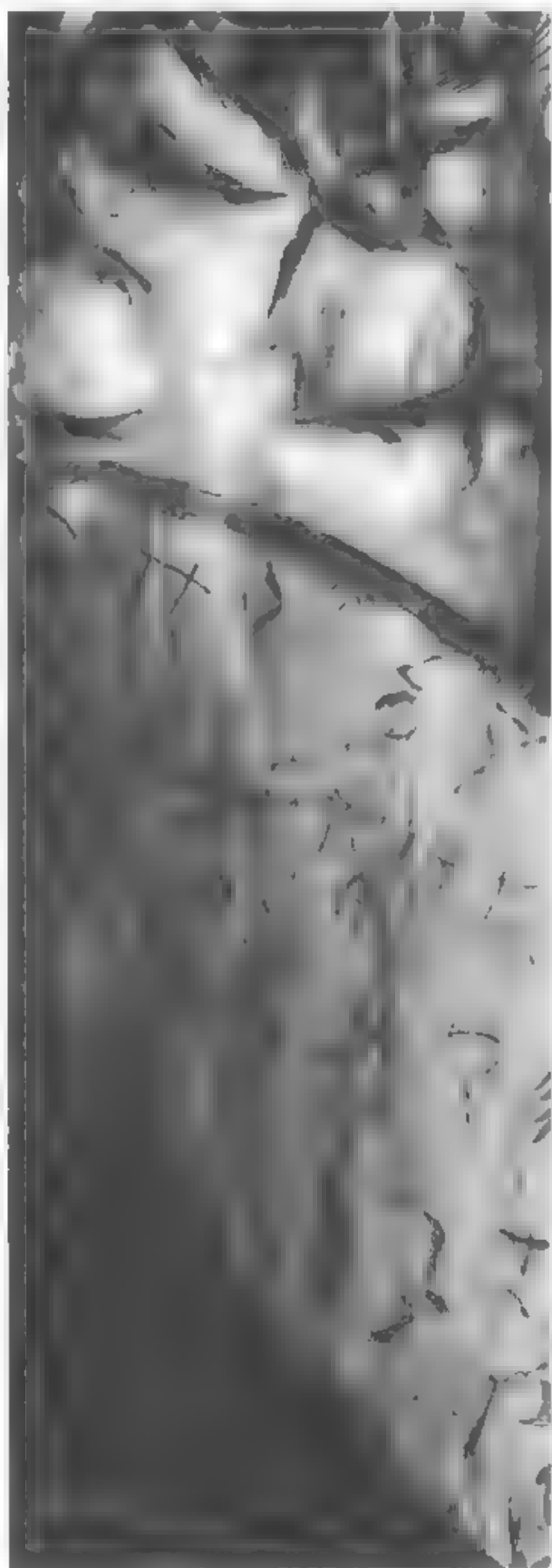
For the Romani seers, time is not a linear concept. Such a narrow conception of reality only makes a Rom laugh. They reason that the poor gaje scientists, who mumble and fret over their test tubes and telescopes and frog's guts, throwing numbers and charts and formulae at the mysteries of the world, are childishly attempting to keep their own simplified creation of reality intact. The scientists' reality is linear and simple, and they whoop and holler with glee when one of their myopic number drafts yet another formula that ties down the world and holds it in place.

But the world is a squirming, living slice of bright chaos, and it will not be restrained forever, no matter how many ropes of logic the scientists lasso around it. Nope. This sucker's a twisting bronco that makes their DNA, RNA and Hooray just a bunch of hokey. The Rom only hope the scientists have a few teddy bears among their test tubes. They're going to need them when they finally realize that life is still primordial soup and current human culture is just a particularly big bubble that's someday going to pop. Take time, for instance, say the seers. Now, time doesn't just march on like a good little soldier, never turning back, never looking to the side. No sirree. Time is the ultimate escape artist with a contortionist's body.

To do the lockjawed types a big favor, the Rom explain time as a million, million, billion threads interweaving and splitting. But sorry folks, there aren't any Norms, no spinning sisters keeping the threads in line. We all, each of us, reach into the morass and twist and turn and yank and cut at the threads (or if we're scientist/one-reality types we morn like a launderer on speed) and move along time at a more-or-less-steady rate. But anyone who's noted how time can fly like a bird or crawl like a turtle knows that time is not immutable — no matter how many watches tick-tock.

Just one more thought and we'll stop needing those linear stooges. Seers have one up on the rest of us mortals. Not only can these Rom play with the threads, the seers can loop, knot and lasso those threads, and thus they can tune into other spots on the dial and check out the happenings there. They can't get to then or when from now, but they can sometimes get an eyeball in on the proceedings.

But keep in mind that although select Gypsies can ogle the threads of time, some celestial cat can always come along and play with the skein of time, and when that happens, who knows what the future holds?



to be in the building. If the character then attempts to determine who exactly will be in the building, the difficulty would rise to a 9 or 10.

Clarity of Sight varies with the number of successes a character gains. For every success the character achieves, he receives one specific image or impression. For instance, if Katarina, a Phuri Dae with the Sight, achieves three successes while attempting to reach into the past to determine who murdered her friend, she will receive three pieces of information. In this case the Storyteller tells Katarina's player that she feels a definite masculine presence, and that she is certain her friend knew her killer. Finally, the Storyteller informs the player that Katarina also has a distinct impression of the man's face, and that she will be able to recognize him on sight. If Katarina had only achieved two successes, she would not have received this final image.

When providing information through the Sight, be certain the information is useful, but remember that such information tends to be cryptic in nature. This is especially true for information given about the future. Information should also be vague and general, but grow increasingly specific and useful with greater numbers of successes.

A character may only attempt to learn information about a specific person, thing or event once, regardless of how much success (or lack thereof) she has in the attempt. She will not be able to gain any additional information about the same exact subject unless she actually uncovers new data about the subject, thus giving her a new focus.

The amount of time the character can attempt to look into the past or future is determined by her level of skill. The greater the seer's skill, the further her mind can reach across the threads of time.

Every use of the Sight costs one point of Willpower.

- **Novice:** The character can see up to 1 month into the past and 2 weeks into the future.
- **Practiced:** The character can see up to 1 year into the past and 6 months into the future.

- **Competent:** The character can see up to 10 years into the past and 5 years into the future.
- **Expert:** The character can see up to 100 years into the past and 50 years into the future.
- **Masters:** The character can see any point in the past or future, though the difficulty for anything beyond 100 years past and 50 years forward is 10.

Greater Auguries

The methods of fortune-telling listed below are those most common to the Gypsies. They are also the most powerful. Whether this is due to the nature of the methods themselves or to the fact that they have been longer practiced by the Rom is unclear. None of these methods is more effective than another; it is equally easy to discern answers regarding any subject when utilizing one of these methods of scrying. By the same token, none of the greater auguries are especially attuned to a particular type of scrying — as are the lesser auguries. Each of the greater auguries has its own peculiarities of form, but all are essentially the same in function.

The player may choose either one of these scrying methods or two of the lesser auguries.

Crystal Gazing: When using this method to overcome the limits of time and see the past or the future, the Gypsy stares into a crystal ball, a mirror or even a black bowl filled with water. Dim lights are preferable — ideally one candle placed so as not to reflect on the surface of the crystal or the water. The Gypsy then relaxes and looks intently into the crystal or into the water until a vision appears to her. If the Gypsy is attempting to discover specific information, she will allow the subject in question to constantly “float” just on the surface of her mind.

Tarot Cards: There are many different versions of the tarot deck. Most Gypsies have a particular version they favor. In fact, many users of the tarot create their own decks. Unlike playing cards, the various symbols and pictures on each tarot card can be as meaningful as the numbers and names of the cards themselves. When the cards are turned face up on the table they can have



many different interpretations. It is the Gypsy's Sight that ferrets out the specific meanings applicable to the particular reading. Her eyes will be drawn to certain parts of the images, to certain interpretations of the numerals, and from these she gains insight into the problem or question at hand.

Tea Leaves: When reading tea leaves, the Gypsy usually uses a specific, favored tea set. She brews a rather bitter draught known as *meski* and has the person who is in need of her Sight drink down the tea. When the tea has been entirely consumed, the seer takes the cup and stares into its depths. The tea leaves form a pattern against the side of the cup. Staring long and hard at the cup, both the seer and the client (or just the seer if she is reading her own leaves) concentrate on the question or problem at hand. Slowly the Gypsy recognizes images formed by the leaves, and she then allows her Sight to interpret the meaning of these symbols for her.

Lesser Auguries

The greater auguries comprise the most popular and flexible styles of fortune-telling among the Gypsies. However, there are many other methods available. Some are age-old, while others have only sprung up in recent years. Each of the lesser auguries specializes in a certain type of knowledge, and it is easier for seers to follow the threads of time along this path. Characters gain a -2 difficulty modifier when searching for knowledge that falls within their lesser augury's specialty area. For example, a Gypsy seer using dazing (specialty: death knowledge) attempting to look back in time at a murder receives a -2 difficulty modifier to her attempt.

Although it is possible to attempt to gain any type of knowledge with a lesser augury, the chances of learning anything about other areas of knowledge is slim. Characters receive a +2 modifier to the difficulty level of any other type of knowledge. In the example above, the seer using the dazing augury decides to look into the future to determine if her lover will be unfaithful. She receives a +2 difficulty level to this attempt, as it is not directly related to death.

Clever players may be able to use both their methods of lesser augury to learn about the same incident or person, however, they must be careful to concentrate on the subject from two entirely different angles, or else their vision will be blocked as discussed above. For example, the seer Katerina could use her skill at dazing to determine some of the facts regarding a murder. She could then use her skill at fire reading to determine more about the murderer's passions, perhaps determining that the murderer both loved and hated his victim.

A few of the rarer and/or newer methods, or lesser auguries, are listed below. Storytellers and players should feel free to create other types of lesser auguries, deciding what type of knowledge each method specializes in.

Casting: Whether the casting is done with runes, dice, sticks, crystals, stones or a host of other materials, the seer studies the pattern of the toss. Searching out patterns, placement, and in some cases markings, the seer seeks the information her Blood tells her is revealed in the cast. Many Rom always carry dice or dominoes with which to make castings for both gaje marks and themselves.

Specialties: Knowledge of accidents, unexpected actions, and acts of fate.

Dazing: Bright strobes, neon lights and the overpowering blare of driving music are often combined in the visionary method known as dazing. At a minimum, the seer must steadily stare at bright, flashing lights for several minutes. The seer lets the light and the after-images flash across her eyes while the vision (hopefully) imprints itself on her mind's eye. A recent phenomenon among the Rom, this method of invoking the Sight is most common among the seers of the Knife Tribe (Sikkers).

For Gypsy seers who enjoy hacking and other computer-related activities, the monitor can aid in the dazing process. A few such seers have been known to use fractals to induce visions.

Specialty: Death knowledge.

Fire Reading: The hypnotic flames of the Romani campfires licking into the night sky have long been useful in stirring the visions of the prophets among the Rom. A seer who chooses this method will sit before an open fire, perhaps toss

ing small handfuls of salt onto the fire as it dies down. For those with the Sight, images may dance within the shining flames and smoke of the fire. This method is particularly favored by the seers of the Lupine clan.

Specialty: Knowledge regarding matters of love and hate.

Hand Readings: Often known as palmistry, this method of *dukkerin* actually involves the subject's entire hand. Although many gaje think hand reading is as simple as searching out a life line here and a love line there, hand reading is a highly exacting method requiring years of study. Every lump and whorl, every line and callous, the length of the fingers and the breadth of the hand—all are studied to gain insights into the individual in question. Often the Gypsy giving the reading will ask many questions of the subject over the course of the reading.

Specialty: This augury may only be used to determine events directly related to the individual being studied, or involving his or her direct ancestors and descendants. Any sort of knowledge can be determined, however, the seer receives the +2 difficulty modifier when attempting to determine information about the subjects' ancestors or descendants.

Knives and Needles: Both knives and needles can be used to discern relatively simple information using the Sight. The knife or needle is suspended by a piece of string or thread and allowed to hang free. A piece of paper with a few simple answers on it, or perhaps a map, is placed beneath the instrument. The seer then places one finger lightly on top of the makeshift apparatus. Concentrating on the desired information, the seer relaxes. If the seer is successful, the knife or needle will slowly begin to move back and forth in the direction of the correct answer or proper place on the map.

Among certain city Rom, the practice of keeping the special needle pierced in an ear lobe or other body part, except when used in the divination, has become very popular recently. Those who do this maintain that it provides more accurate readings.

Specialty: Knowledge regarding where and when things and people are in time and space.



Thrashing: Some of the younger Rom use the frenetic energy and release of dance to bring their talent into focus. This method is frequently accompanied by alcohol and drug use, but not always. Thrashing, slamming, and other frenetic dance forms seem to work best. As with the method of dazing, discussed above, just when the seer's body reaches its physical limits he is often violently besieged with images and symbols. It is wise for those who use this method to keep a tape recorder going, because the seer usually loses consciousness soon after the images fade, and the visions are often forgotten upon waking.

Specialty Knowledge of pain and conflict

The Evil Eye

*Since that night I'm not the same
Desire breeds an ugly stain inside me
Satisfaction never comes
It's always dark and yet still I run
Even when I close my eyes
You torture me
Waking in a chilling sweat
Pounding heart inside my chest I'm screaming
Melissa Etheridge, "I Want You"*

The Evil Eye has caused great fear throughout history. Even today, many people make gestures or buy charms to ward off the Evil Eye and its effects. Often thought to be possessed only by certain ancient and evil women, it has been used as an excuse for numerous atrocities committed against both Gypsies and women. Many of the women accused of witchcraft during the Inquisition were said to have cursed their neighbors by employing the Evil Eye. Of course, almost all the women accused, tortured and killed were utterly incapable of using this powerful method of attack. They were simply unfortunate victims of the paranoia and misogyny of the times.

Certain Gypsies, both male and female, possess the Evil Eye ability. Among the Rom, the Evil Eye is a powerful and respected ability, but it also tends to isolate the individual so gifted. Others, even the Romani, are nervous around these people. More than most other Gypsies, the Romani who have the power of the Evil Eye also possess an aura of strangeness and fear.

Gypsies with the Evil Eye receive a +1 difficulty modifier to all Social rolls involving gaje or Romani. This modifier is in addition to any other modifications the character may have due to her degree of Blood Purity. Note that this difficulty does not apply to vampires and the like.

Characters attempting to use the Evil Eye should state what they wish to happen to their victim, e.g.: "Bad fortune befall you!", "Hope you get one wicked case of athlete's foot!", or what have you. The effects of the Evil Eye can vary, but should include consequences such as automatic botches, the Storyteller taking away dice from an affected character's roll, or a temporary loss in appearance due to the sudden emergence of clumps of fungus on unfortunate areas of a character's anatomy. The downside to all of this for the Romani using the Evil Eye is that if she botches, she affects herself instead!

Characters using the Evil Eye must make an Evil Eye + Manipulation roll (difficulty of the target's Willpower + 2).

As indicated below, the number of successes rolled when using the Evil Eye determines both the intensity and duration of the curse. A character who uses the Evil Eye may remove its effects at any time (unless she is the one affected).

One Success: Curse affects victim for one week. Victim is mildly affected (loses one die on some Skill rolls, grows a wart on her cheek, botches one roll, etc.).

Two Successes: Curse affects victim for one month, loses one die on 10 different Skill rolls, receives 3 automatic botches, etc.

Three Successes: Curse affects victim for six months, 6 automatic botches, lose 1-2 dice from half of her Skill rolls for the duration, or loses all her hair.

Four Successes: Curse affects victim for one year, 12 automatic botches, 2-3 dice from half her Skill rolls for the duration, or receives a severe curse or injury.

Five Successes: Curse affects victim indefinitely. Effects are similar to four successes above, except that the results of the Evil Eye are permanent if not removed by magical or miraculous means.



The Evil Eye may be warded off through the use of a piece of draba designed for that purpose, with the strength of the draba negating that number of Evil Eye successes. However, once the draba has been overcome by a Gypsy using the Evil Eye, it is rendered useless. See the Draba section (below) for more information about this Romani art.

The Evil Eye may only be reversed by the cursing Gypsy or by another Gypsy with skill in the Evil Eye. The cursing Gypsy may automatically cancel the effects of the Evil Eye. Another Gypsy skilled in the Evil Eye must make an Evil Eye + Charisma roll (difficulty of 3 + the number of cursing successes originally achieved). The player must subtract the number of successes the Gypsy attempting to reverse the process receives (if any) from the number of original successes. The resulting difference determines the remaining strength of the curse, if any.

For example, Jusa has been cursed to trip whenever he enters combat. The cursing Gypsy received four successes, so poor Jusa will automatically trip the next 12 times he is in combat. He goes to another Rom who possesses the Evil Eye and she attempts to cure him. The Gypsy rolls three successes. These successes are subtracted from the initial strength of the curse ($4-3=1$), and so Jusa will only be forced to trip once in combat. If he has already tripped once or more, the curse is lifted.

Any Gypsy can only make one attempt to remove a particular curse. If a Gypsy attempting to reverse the Evil Eye botches his roll he must make a second test. Any successes made on this test actually increase the severity of the curse by that number of successes.

Mediumship

The Romani who function as mediums are far more than mere table-rattlers who hulk unfortunates out of their life savings. Romani with this Affinity are actually able to contact the ghosts and spirits inhabiting the spiritual planes of existence. As the Tree of Knowledge once bridged the gap between the spiritual and material planes of existence, so now does the Romani medium.

The Romani always know which of their members will have this Affinity, as a medium is born



with the birth caul still covering his face. A piece of this caul is placed in an amulet, and the medium bears this amulet for the rest of his life. When used in the creation of a protective piece of draba known as a soul-chain, the caul protects its bearer from spiritual attack.

The Rom have a small connection to the group of gaje known as the Benandanti. These gaje are also born with cauls and know how to journey into the Underworld. Some Gypsies claim the Benandanti stole this knowledge from the Rom, while others say it was freely given. In any event, the Rom and the Benandanti occasionally aid each other, and the two groups are usually at least neutral toward each other.

A character with this Affinity may attempt to reach into either the Underworld or the spiritual plane to contact the ghosts of the dead by making a Mediumship + Charisma roll. The difficulty level of such a task starts at 10. However, if the character has an item that once belonged to the person, or is in the presence of someone close to

the person, the difficulty drops to 9. If the medium is in the former home of the person or the place of her death, the difficulty level drops to 8. If both of these physical contacts are available, the difficulty level drops to 7. Similarly, if the medium is located at a place where the veil between the spiritual world (or the Underworld) and the living world is particularly thin (such as a cross, nihil, node, etc.) the difficulty of the attempt is reduced by two.

If the Storyteller uses *Wraith: The Oblivion*, then mediums who have a fetter of the wraith they are trying to contact reduce their difficulty by one for each fetter used. Note that botches on this roll can be truly devastating, for who knows what might arise from the Underworld.

Maintaining contact with the spirit world is a very difficult task. For every success the medium achieves, she may speak to the spirit for one minute. This time period can be doubled if the medium expends another point of Willpower in the effort.

A medium may also attempt to banish a ghost or spirit from a building or area it is haunting. For such attempts the medium makes a sustained Mediumship + Manipulation roll (difficulty of the ghost's Willpower + 3). A botched attempt here may cause the ghost in question to begin harassing the medium. The medium must make a number of successes equal to twice the ghost's Willpower in order to banish the spirit. Launching such an attack costs the medium one point of Willpower, but she may continue to attack for the duration of the scene (or until the battle is decided).

As the medium's level of control increases, she may gain one or more spirit contacts. Such spirits are friendly with the medium and will even do brief errands for her. It is up to the Storyteller to decide when such a contact is made, but the medium will generally have to do something for the spirit, such as aiding a still-living relative or avenging the ghost's murder, to achieve such a contact.

The medium may also send her spirit into the Underworld (not the astral plane), leaving her body behind in the living lands. While the medium's body is vacant, it is vulnerable to possession by both spirits and the souls of the dead. Certain draba (for example, a soul-chain) may protect the medium's body during her spirit's absence, while others may allow the Gypsy to attack spirit-beings and defend herself in the Underworld. Any draba that affects spirits in the living world may be carried by the medium and used in the Underworld.

The length of time the Gypsy medium may remain separated from her body depends on her degree of skill. However, she may only journey to the Underworld between sunset and sunrise. If she remains away from her body after sunrise, the medium will be unable to return to her body until the next night. Very few mediums survive by themselves in the Underworld for a full day and night. If the medium's body is left vacant for more than 24 hours, it will slip into a coma.

After 12 hours away from her body, the medium must make a Stamina + Mediumship roll (difficulty of 5) to return to her body. The difficulty level of this roll increases by one for every twelve additional hours the medium remains away from her body (to a maximum of 10).

If the medium remains away from her body for longer than she is capable of (based on her ability in Mediumship), her body will begin to take damage at the rate of one Health Level per six hours she remains away from it.

In order to attempt contact with the spirit world, or to send her spirit into the Underworld, the medium must expend one point of Willpower.

- The medium may remain away from her body for up to six hours at a time before taking damage.
- The medium may remain away from her body for up to twelve hours before taking damage.
- The Gypsy may remain away from her body for a maximum of one day before taking damage.
- The Gypsy can remain away from her body for one week before taking damage.
- The medium may remain away from her body indefinitely, although, as always, if her body dies, she dies as well.

Draba

Woke to a Gypsy girl saying "Drink this"

Well my hands lost all sensation

These days I'm feeling all right

Except I can't tell my courage from my desperation

— Bruce Springsteen, "Local Hero"

Draba is the Gypsy art of creating foci, potions, amulets, oils, and charms. Such devices only last for a short while, but provide the Rom with a store of useful magical devices to aid her in her dealings. The range of such foci is vast, with each drabarne, as the practitioners of this art are termed, having her own special creative knowledges. A drabarne's work may be used by anyone of the Blood, but no gaje is capable of using one of these magical devices. It should be noted that a Ravnos shilmulo could use a piece of draba, but only if she currently had Romani Blood flowing within her veins.

The art of creating draba must be learned through study with an accomplished drabarne. Such a Gypsy will have her own favorite potions and foci, but it is the will to create, the specific needs of the creator, and the power in her Blood that determine the powers of any draba.



Normally, young drabarne learn how to create specific draba from the elder drabarne in their family or kumpania. It is much easier to create a piece of draba if the Gypsy has already witnessed the creation of a similar piece of work. However, this does not mean a Gypsy cannot attempt to create a specific amulet, charm, potion, etc. of her own devising, or one she may only have heard tales about. But creating such a charm will be more difficult and take more time.

A character may have from one to five dots of skill in Draba, corresponding to the five power levels. These categories represent the character's level of training in the art of creation and will required to make and empower foci. A character can only create a draba of her skill level or lower. So a character with three dots in Draba can only create foci of power levels one, two and three. The more powerful draba are beyond her skill to empower.

When attempting to create a specific item the character rolls her Draba + Blood Purity dice (difficulty of 6). If she is attempting to create an item for the first time, the difficulty rises to 8. Additionally, she must spend one point of Willpower to fuse her will into physical form.

The number of successes and the level of the draba determine the amount of time necessary to create the item. The base time for such creation is one day per level of the draba (two days if the drabarne has never created such a draba before). Every additional success decreases the amount of time required by twelve hours.

For example, when Elspa is attempting to create a mystic veil (level 3 draba), a piece of draba she has created before, she expends a point of Willpower and her player rolls Elspa's Draba + Blood Purity. Elspa must be particularly in tune with her creation, because she gets three successes. A mystic veil normally takes three days to create, but since Elspa's player rolled two extra successes she will only need two days (3 days - 24 hours = 2 days) to empower her new draba. If she was attempting to create a mystic veil for the first time (and still achieved three successes) it would have taken Elspa five days (6 days - 24 hours = 5 days) to empower her creation.

Examples of draba of all five levels are given below. However, these are only examples of various draba that a character with this skill could create. Storytellers and players are encouraged to work together to create new draba for characters with this skill, using the draba below as guidelines for each power level.

Level One

Earring of Earthly Grounding: This protective working can actually be placed into any piece of silver jewelry. However, it is most commonly worked into the form of an earring. Any piece of jewelry so enchanted must also contain a small piece of amber, a source of mystical grounding. The earring aids the wearer in fending off magical attacks (spells, curses, etc.) directed at the wearer. While wearing the earring, the character adds one die to any rolls to resist magical effects. The earring will continue to function for a number of months equal to the creator's skill level multiplied by the number of successes on the creation roll.

Philter of Desire: This sweet mixture affects the imbiber's perceptions and emotions, causing him to fall madly in love with either the next person he sees or a specific individual (depending on the wishes of the drabarne). The victim may make a Stamina + Wits roll (difficulty of 8) to resist the effects of the draught. The effect of this potion lasts a number of weeks equal to the drabarne's skill level multiplied by the number of successes achieved during creation, minus the victim's successes.

Healing Balm: This ointment, when applied directly to wounds, will heal one wound level per application. The number of applications available equals the number of successes made by the drabarne at the time of creation.

Disk of Bedevilment: This charm is placed on a specially created computer disk. The disk looks just like an ordinary computer disk, although it does have a faint magical aura surrounding it. When inserted in a computer, the disk releases a tiny gremlin into the disk operating system. The gremlin will cause the computer to operate sluggishly and temperamentally, adding +2 to the difficulty level of any Computer rolls performed by anyone not of the Blood.

Meanwhile, the gremlin aids any Rom who operates the computer, giving the Rom a -1 to the difficulty level of any Computer roll, including Computer Hacking. The gremlin has a very short attention span and will only remain in the computer for five minutes times the number of the drabarne's successes before moving on to more enjoyable sports.

Level Two

Deltumnimos (God's Embrace): This concoction of wine, mugwort and powdered amethyst expands the awareness and senses of any Rom who ingests the powerful brew, bringing her into a state of existence more in tune with the spirit realm and the flow of magical power.

While under the effects of *deltumnimos*, the character may add a number of dice equal to the drabarne's Draba level to all rolls for the Sight or Mediumship. The imbiber must roll Stamina + Skill (e.g. the Sight) to determine the duration of the potion's effect. The effects of the brew last for one hour per success.

Diklo of Anyara: Named for Anyara Buyesti, a legendary master of disguise, this head scarf bestows the ability of disguise upon the wearer. When the owner of the diklo places the scarf on his head and expends one point of Willpower to activate its magic, the diklo grants the wearer an almost impenetrable disguise. The magic of the diklo affects observers' senses, altering their perception of the Rom so that, no matter how long they stare at the Gypsy, they cannot later recall anything about his appearance. Even the gender and race of the Gypsy will be extremely difficult for an observer to recall.

The diklo's effect lasts for one scene. It can be used a number of times equal to the Draba skill of the creator. The diklo does not fool mechanical devices (e.g., cameras), but eyewitnesses can only recall the Rom's appearance on a Wits + Alertness roll (difficulty 9). For every success achieved, an observer can recall one detail about the Gypsy (e.g., gender, height, etc.).

Dook Angustri: This magical amulet is always crafted in the form of jewelry worn flush with the skin, be it a ring, bracelet, spiked collar, etc.

The *dook angustri*, or magic seeker, serves as a magic sensor for the Gypsy, becoming warm in the presence of a magical item, effect or creature. The intensity of the heat varies with the proximity and strength of the magic, although it never reaches a temperature hot enough to burn the skin.

The amulet lasts for two months times the *drabarne's* number of successes during creation.

Whuzo Ointment: This balm can remove any impurities tainting a Gypsy. Such impurities include non-magical poisons and disease, but do not include such things as changing a vampire back into human form. The number of doses created equals the number of successes achieved by the *drabarne*.

Level Three

Amulet of Mechanical Aptitude: This amulet is normally a ring or bracelet cobbled together from computer chips and wires. The amulet enhances the ability of the Rom to work with machines as well as any spirits or faeries inside a machine. While wearing the amulet, the Rom has an instinctive feeling as to what actions or commands will best achieve her goals.

The Gypsy must expend one point of Willpower to activate the amulet. When wearing this amulet the Gypsy should add 3 dice to any rolls to manipulate a mechanical device (e.g.: computers, ATMs, engines). Additionally, the Gypsy has a small chance to discover something that would normally be impossible to figure out in a given circumstance (for example guessing the correct PIN number of a stolen ATM card). The Gypsy may roll her (appropriate Ability) + three Amulet dice (difficulty 10). The amulet may be used a number of times equal to the creator's *Draba* skill.

Mystic Veil: In the past, this piece of *draba* was most often constructed to appear as a gauzy veil. However, many such "veils" now take the form of sunglasses or bandannas. When the Gypsy wearing the mystic veil expends one point of Willpower, he becomes difficult to sense at all. This item grants the wearer the same abilities as the Unseen Presence Obfuscate Discipline does vampires. The veil can be used a number of times equal to the creator's successes.



Snake Oil: This light green tincture grants the Rom the charismatic gifts of the legendary fork-tongued reptile. When applied to the tongue, the Gypsy decreases the difficulty level of all Manipulation rolls by 2. When applied to the face and eyelids, the Rom's Appearance attribute increases by two. If applied to the tips of the fingers, the difficulty of all tasks requiring Dexterity decreases by 2. The effects last for one scene. The number of applications available equals the drabarne's level + the number of successes.

Charm of the Wanderer: This focus is created from the feathers of a magpie or parrot. It is normally placed on a necklace or hair adornment for ease of carrying. The charm of the wanderer allows the wearer to speak with any individual known to the wearer (including spirits and fairies), no matter how distant the target.

When the wearer desires communication, she spends one point of Willpower while brushing the feather lightly across her eyes, ears and forehead (the location of her "third eye"). The wearer must then roll a Manipulation + Blood Purity (difficulty depends on the distance to the target) to see whether she has made contact with the desired target.

Difficulty 5: Target within 100 miles.

Difficulty 6: Target within 1000 miles.

Difficulty 7: Target on same continent.

Difficulty 8: Target on different continent.

Difficulty 9: Target traveling the spirit world (or a spirit itself).

The conversation cannot be heard by anyone save the target, and neither party needs to speak out loud to communicate. The length of the conversation is based on the number of successes achieved by the Contact roll. The conversation can continue for up to five minutes per success.

The charm of the wanderer can only be used once, because the feather will fall apart as the conversation ends. However, some drabarne have been known to create more complex charms from several feathers, with each feather good for one such conversation. The creation of these multi-feathered charms adds +1 per additional feather to the difficulty level during the creation process.

Soul-Chain: The soul-chain is an amulet containing a piece of birth caul, normally the caul of

the individual the soul-chain is created for. When worn, the soul-chain protects the bearer's body from attack by spirits and disembodied (or dead) souls of all kinds. The number of successes the drabarne achieves while creating this amulet determines its effectiveness. The soul-chain has a defense score equal to 3 + its power (number of unused successes), or 2 + its power if the caul is not from the bearer's birth. The soul-chain automatically defends the bearer's body while his soul is away and its power adds to the difficulty of any spirit attempts to affect the owner.

The bearer may also use the power of the soul-chain to grant him automatic successes when combating spirits. Each automatic success declared lowers the soul-chain's power level by one.

The soul-chain must be recharged (recreated) every year and a day or it will become inert. The piece of caul at the soul-chain's heart may be used over and over again in different soul-chains.

Level Four

Baxt Charm: The baxt charm can be worked on any small personal item, from a gold coin to a rabbit's foot to a favorite hat. However, when the charm is created, it must be made for a specific Gypsy and placed on an item of some sentimental importance to the bearer.

The baxt charm gives the bearer the Luck of the Rom (as the Blood Affinity). The bearer may activate the charm whenever she sees fit simply by rubbing the charm in her hands and spending one point of Willpower. The charm lasts for one story per success achieved by the drabarne during creation, and gives the bearer a number of Luck dice equal to the drabarne's skill level. These dice are used up in the same way normal Luck dice are, and can be activated for as many stories as the drabarne achieved successes.

Cat's Paw: This magical sigil must be worked into the Rom's skin by a skilled drabarne using needles and dyes to create a tattoo in the shape of a cat's paw. The tattoo may be placed anywhere on the Rom's body, although most such tattoos are placed on the Gypsy's chest or arm.

The cat's paw takes one point of Willpower to activate. When activated, the tattoo grants the Rom cat-like reflexes and magical speed. The

character's Dexterity increases by two dots and the character's Speed doubles, allowing her to double her number of physical attacks

The effects of the cat's paw last for one scene, and the bearer may use the cat's paw a number of times equal to the Draba skill of the drabarne creator. When the cat's paw has been used for the final time, the tattoo will burn momentarily and then fade, leaving only a slight discoloration of the skin that vanishes altogether in a few weeks time

Mule-Vi: A mule-vi (literally "ghost-sight") is always created from a piece of glass, normally a lens or lenses of some sort. A mule-vi has two separate uses. First, the device enables the Rom to see into the spirit world. The bearer must make a Perception + Magic roll (difficulty of 7) to activate the device. If successful, the Rom can use the mule-vi to see into the spirit realm. The effect lasts for five minutes per success.

The mule-vi also enables the Gypsy to perceive the true nature of anyone he sees while looking through the lens. Thus vampires, werewolves, mages, wraiths and spirit-beings appear in their true form (or radiate magic in the case of mages) to the Rom. The Rom must make a Wits + Charisma roll (difficulty of the target's Willpower) to see through the target's false identity

A mule-vi may be used a number of times equal to the successes the creator rolled making it before it cracks and becomes useless

Shadow Brew: This bitter potion is never brewed in more than a single draught consisting of five drops of dark brown liquid. The strength of the poisons used in the creation of the shadow brew (including belladonna and opium) is such that if someone swallows more than one draught in a 24-hour period, death is almost always swift and inevitable (Stamina + Occult roll, difficulty of 8)

When consumed, the shadow brew enables a Rom to loosen the ties of her spiritual and physical form to the physical plane. The Gypsy can then slip into the mystic area the Gypsies term the shadow realm. The shadow realm is a tiny area of reality on the cusp between the physical and spiritual realms. When walking the shadows a Rom can perceive both the physical and spiritual

worlds clearly. However, he cannot be perceived by beings in either world unless they make a successful Wits + Occult roll (difficulty of 8)

Because the Rom is still connected, however tenuously, to the physical plane of existence, he cannot travel at faster than normal speeds. However, the Rom can manipulate objects in either the physical or spiritual plane by making a successful Manipulation + Dexterity roll (difficulty of 7). The effects of the brew last for the duration of a scene

Level Five

Dukkerin Disc: Certain drabarne (mostly those of the Phuri Dae) have learned that charms can be placed on any compact disc. This particular charm is especially powerful and it can only be created by a drabarne who also has the Sight. In a ritual lasting from dusk to dawn, the drabarne decides what information she is seeking along the time line (in either direction) and then allows her consciousness to fly free as she reaches into the threads of time and binds certain of these threads into the laser codes on the CD. The drabarne can only access the span of time along which she can normally travel when using the Sight. The drabarne must expend two points of Willpower in the disc's weaving and she must make a Stamina + Sight roll (difficulty of 7) to determine the number of songs she weaves onto the disc

Once the ritual is completed, the drabarne plays the CD to hear what information she has recorded. Each song (success) achieved adds another dimension to the information available. This information is not nearly as general and obscure as much information gained through the Sight. On the contrary, it is quite clear. However, it is always conveyed by warping the lyrics of the songs already on the CD; the music itself remains the same

For example, if the drabarne seer, Katya, wishes to discover the details of the disappearance and subsequent murder of a kumpania of young Rom, she will concentrate on the facts she does know about the murdered Rom. Rolling her Draba + Sight, Katya gets two successes. Exhausted but excited, Katya and the rest of her kumpania gather around the CD player they just swiped to listen to the results of her psychic search

Since she had two successes, there are two songs on the disc warped by the threads of time to provide information. The first of these songs tells in graphic detail of how the kidnapping and murder were performed (drugging of drinks and subsequent beating and strangulation). The second song's lyrics speak of burning hatred for the impure and unwise among today's Rom, especially those who associate with the traitors

(To U2's "So Cruel")

*You love the gaze, who you should hate the most,
Their filth passes through you, lodges in your throat*

*We sought you out, you who didn't care
Baby ... you're nowhere*

Despair at your twisted mind traps

It gets you every time

We put our guns to your heads

To stop the lie

Since she only had two successes, Katya does not discover the identities of the murderers, but her kumpania may now be able to guess the murders were done by their fellow Rom, most probably some Tsurara radicals.

Another version of this charm uses videodiscs instead of musical CDs. When using such discs, the Gypsy receives a series of snapshot images superimposed upon the normal pictures on the disc; one snapshot per success

Suspended Blood Focus: This powerful focus can only be created by the most skilled of drabarne, in a ritual requiring the presence of at least five Rom. Prior to the ritual, the drabarne crafts an unusual box or shell from a piece of onyx or petrified wood. The focus, once prepared, is passed around to all the Rom at the ritual, and each allows several drops of Blood to drop into the focus. As the box is passed around, the drabarne concentrates her Will to contain the energies of the Blood unmixed, in the shell. Each Gypsy participating in the ritual must spend one point of Willpower. The combined amount of Blood Purity points of the Gypsies is focused in the shell.

If the ritual is successful, the suspended Blood focus can store up to 20 Blood Purity points within itself. Unlike the normal Blood Focus (see Group Power, above) the suspended Blood focus does not



need to be attuned to a particular Gypsy at the time of its creation. It will become attuned to any Gypsy who places a few drops of Blood on the outside of the shell and expends one point of Willpower to seal the bond. Additionally, the focus does not have any time constraints on how soon it must be used.

The suspended focus works in a different manner from a normal Blood focus. The Gypsy attuned to the suspended focus may draw Blood Purity points (dice) from the shell whenever she chooses. Each Blood Purity point in the shell equals an automatic success for the Gypsy. She may use such successes (as many as she wants, up to the total number currently in the shell) on a skill roll for any Blood Affinity.

However, once a die of Blood Purity has been used, it is gone from the shell forever. So a suspended Blood focus with 18 Blood Purity points grants the Gypsy 18 extra dice to play with. She could conceivably use them all for one roll, but it is far more common for a Gypsy to use up only a few precious points at a time. Once a focus is reduced to 0 Blood Purity points, it crumbles into dust.

For example, let's say Star has an 18-point suspended Blood focus, and she decides to distract a bunch of clubbing vampires she suspects might be thinking of snacking on her. Deciding to use her Affinity of Zapaderin, Star also resolves to kick in some of the successes from her focus, four in all. (She doesn't want to screw this one up.) Once she has danced her dance and left the vamparasites in a daze, she still has 14 Blood Purity points remaining in her focus.

Needle of the Mind's Eye: This amulet always takes the form of a large needle, at least six inches long. The needle is carved from ivory or ash wood, and is decorated with a series of tiny runes. To activate the needle's powers, a Rom must pierce his skin with the needle while simultaneously expending one point of Willpower.

The magic of the needle allows the user to walk the multiple paths of the spirit plain. The needle serves as an artificial anchor connecting the Gypsy's spirit to his physical body through a thin thread of the Gypsy's own soul (visible on the spirit plain).

While using the needle of the mind's eye to travel the spirit realms, even an inexperienced Gypsy can find his way to different areas of the astral plane (e.g.: Arcadia, the Aboriginal Dreamtime, etc.). He merely has to concentrate on the area or information he most seeks, and a second thread will snake out in front of him, leading the Rom to his chosen location. While traveling the spirit realms, the Gypsy is visible to any others also in the spirit plain and is vulnerable to attack.

The needle may be used five times before it loses its power. The needle will function for up to five hours per use. If a character remains away from his body for longer than this, the Rom must make a Stamina + Occult roll (difficulty of 7) to keep from losing contact with his physical body. This roll must be repeated for every 10 minutes the Gypsy remains away from his body. This roll must also be made if the needle is removed from the Rom's body at any time while the character's spirit is away from the body.

If the Gypsy does lose contact with his physical form, he can make a number of tries equal to his Stamina dots to find his body and reconnect his spirit. This requires a Perception + Occult roll (difficulty of 9).

Sarrath's Claw: A drabarne who creates one of these powerful weapons is said to be following in the footsteps of Daenna's brother, Sarrath, who is thought to have been the first Gypsy to create such an item. Any weapon successfully engraved with the symbol of Sarrath (three curved claws tipped in blood) and empowered through the force of the drabarne's will becomes a weapon capable of doing great harm (aggravated damage) to all beings, including vampires, spirit-dwellers, faeries and werereatures.

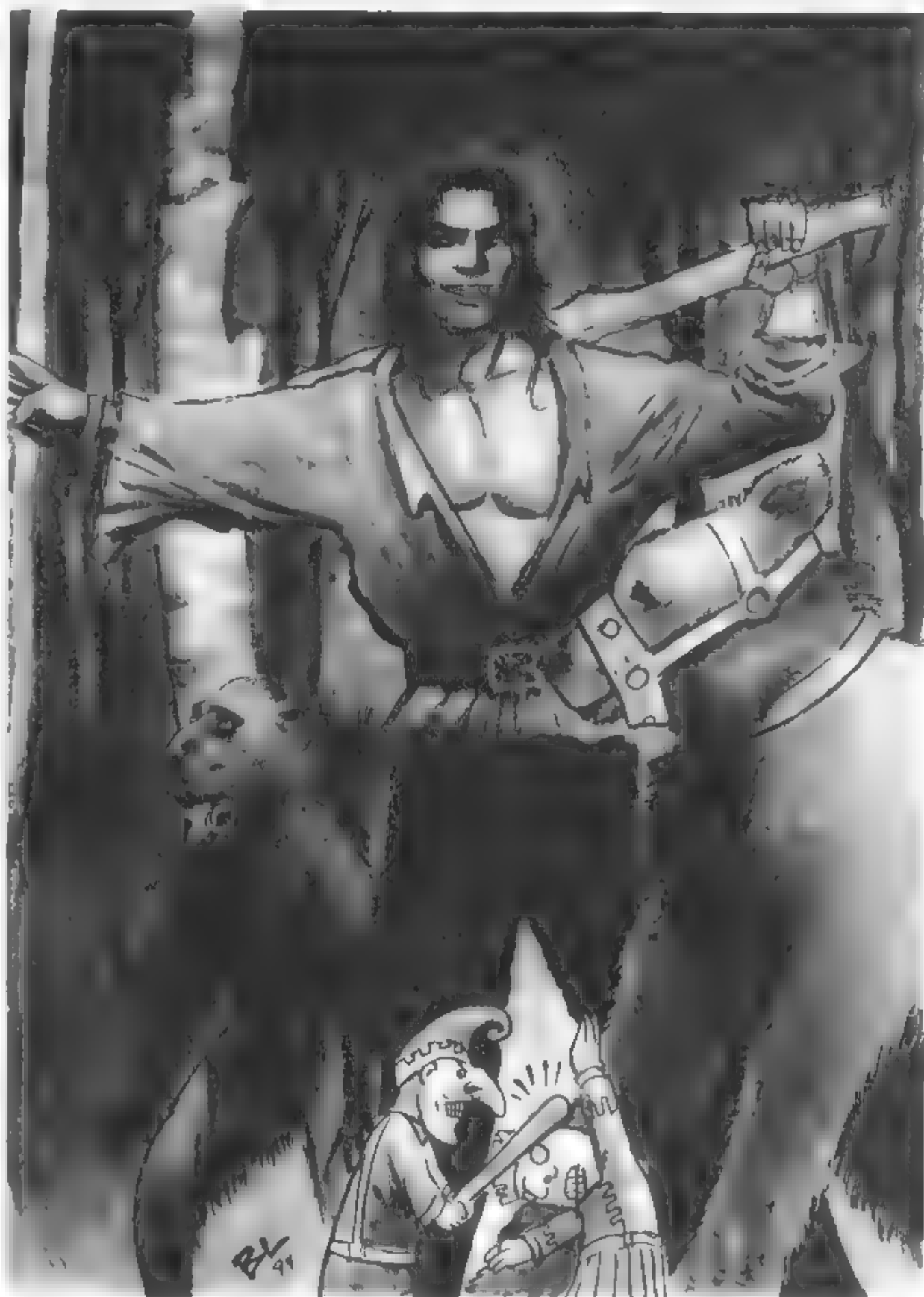
In addition to the immediate damage, the weapon has a chance of inflicting additional wound levels in the five succeeding rounds as small pieces of the claw work their way deeper into the target's body. In each of the five rounds after the claw first hits a creature, the target must make a successful Willpower roll plus Fortitude for vampires (difficulty of the wielder's Willpower) or take an additional aggravated wound.

The magic of Sarrath's Claw on a victim is not cumulative. Further attacks from the claw will do immediate damage to an already affected victim, but not any more additional damage. However, once the effects of the first attack are over (five rounds), a new success with the claw will start the process anew.

The claw will remain effective for a number of attacks equal to five times the number of the drabarne's creation successes. Before its first use,

Sarrath's claw must be bonded to a particular Gypsy. This bonding requires the expenditure of one point of Willpower.

Any melee weapon may be so empowered, although bladed weapons are traditional. Such weapons are particularly dangerous in the hands of a skilled Knife Dancer. They are especially favored by the Tsurara family, whose drabarne are rumored to have achieved new heights of damage with their multi-barbed claws.



Chapter Five: Families of Power

*Afoot and light-hearted I take to the open road
Healthy, free, the world before me,
The long brown path before me leads wherever I choose
Walt Whitman, 'Songs of the Open Road'*

Family and identity are extremely important to the Rom. This is even more true in the dark world of the Storyteller System than in our own. Persecution is greater, and the Gypsies are more often targeted for assimilation or genocide. This persecution has begun to cause rifts between certain Gypsy families—even among those who still value the true knowledge which built their race. Such is human nature.

Still, the family is not the be-all and end-all of the Gypsy world. Most Gypsies freely associate with other Rom, so long as there is no specific feud between the two individuals. The general maxim

is that a Rom is to be trusted until proven unworthy, while a gaje is an enemy until proven otherwise (a difficult task at best for the poor gaje!). While Gypsies from different families often have preconceived notions of what members of other Gypsy families are like, a fellow Rom will be given the benefit of the doubt unless the two families are currently feuding.

Innumerable Rom families remain scattered throughout the world. Each family has its own unique traditions and ways of interacting with the universe. Some families mix freely, while others have been feuding for years. Some of the more

prominent Gypsy families, those that have carefully maintained their birthright of knowledge and power — or claim to have done so, are described below. This does not mean there are not other families with members possessing such knowledge, but the knowledge may be peripheral to the family's functioning, or the family may simply be less well-known in Romani lore.

For instance, the Zingaresche family, whose members can be found in Asia and the Americas, are known for their deftness in the art of Zapaderin, the Dance of Knives, and in any other dance-related ability as well. Zingaresche kumpaniyi almost always make their way as entertainers, and it is said some of the more talented members of this family have advanced the arts of dance so far that they can charm animals as well as people. Other stories claim that the Zingaresche know certain dance-rites, forgotten by all other families, that contain information regarding the Seeds of Knowledge and the coming Convergence. Unfortunately, the Zingaresche are dwindling in numbers, and there are few of their kumpaniyi still wandering the Earth.

The Tinkers are another interesting family based almost exclusively in the British Isles, with a few branches recently traveling to the United States. This family is the preeminent Gypsy family in the British Isles, and the Gypsy King of Britain is a member of their family. There are rumors that this family is friendly with the faeries, and thus it may even have members with some faerie blood, although it is not of the Urme clan.

The Tinkers are the family with perhaps the most-skilled drabarne. Even the Phuri Dae cannot claim to have the knowledge of draba that the Tinkers do. The Tinkers are also one of the most old-fashioned of Gypsy families, staying well away from all gaje culture. The only exception to this is the growing number of younger Tinkers who have managed to adapt to and exploit computers and the new information boom with remarkable ease. Legends of their technological feats are already spreading throughout the families of the Rom.

The Banjara family of India spends almost all of its time in the vast sewers and undercities of that country, only sneaking into the outside world to thief from or trade with the gaje. When other



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families travel through India, they often enter the underground world of the Banjara to speak with its Queen, Pashira, who is said to have committed to memory every foot of her underground empire, or to gain swift passage past prying gaje authorities (for a price, of course).

Young Banjarans, known as Calibans, can be found throughout the sewers and undercities of the world. Relatively few in number, such Calibans are considered *baxi*, or good luck, by other Gypsies. It is bad luck not to feed a Caliban who knocks on the door of your *vardo*. Calibans often have a wealth of information about their city, and nearby cities, at their disposal. They are also often on at least neutral terms with the Bone Gnawer Garou and Nosferatu vampires who also make their homes in the daylight world's underbelly. Unfortunately, some of the younger Calibans have been known to sell out other Rom to the Tsurara or even the gaje. The Banjara are said to have rediscovered much lost information in their travels throughout the underground world.

These families, and many others, inhabit the World of Darkness along with the families described in more detail below.

The identity of each of the families below centers on certain aspects of Daenna and the Seeds of Knowledge. Each of these families of power claims to be associated with at least one of the Seeds, and asserts that a member of their particular family is a current Guardian. Such claims are never backed with tangible evidence, as this would require the Guardian to betray her responsibility to keep her Seed hidden.

Yet recognition as one of the chosen families of power (marked by the historical possession or supposed current possession of a Seed) is zealously guarded by the family in question. Although there have been some changes in status throughout the ages, all but the Tsurara have been considered among the families of power for more than a millennia. (Only in the last 30 years or so have the Banjaras not been considered a family of power. This change has infuriated its members, and if they can find a way to win back their position, they will.)

The Rom bloodlines flow freely together and apart. Excepting the occasional blood feud, young Rom of different families are normally encouraged

to have children together. The Gypsies' reasoning behind this is that Blood weds Blood, as the dilution of the Rom's heritage of power is the one sure way for their enemies to destroy them. Unfortunately, this sometimes promotes the Rom's prejudice against other races. Such prejudice is an irony which the Rom do not always appreciate.

The families of power are particularly careful to preserve the Blood. Often current members of these families were born into different families, and then chose or were chosen to join one of these "families of power," as they call themselves. Keep in mind that although members of the same family tend to have the same general ethos, not all individuals will agree wholeheartedly with the party line, as is ever the case among the Rom.

The Lupines

We are all animals, my lady

— Darkness, from *Legend*

The Lupines, also referred to as the Children of Sarrath, are almost all human. They are all kin, either by blood or marriage, to werewolves. Sarrath's descendants are kin to the Silent Strider tribe of Garou, as they are all quite aware. They are also the traditional keepers of Ruzlekin, the Seed of Burning Tears.

This family is one of the oldest in existence, perhaps the oldest family of power, for it traces its history back to Daenna and her brother, Sarrath, who were at one point more than siblings. This union resulted in twin sons, the first of the Children of Sarrath. Although other families occasionally refer to them as "inbreds," the Lupines believe they are the closest to Daenna, being doubly related to her.

As the Lupines tell the tale, somewhere back in the fuzzy pre-dawn of the modern world, Sarrath and Daenna's twin sons, Abram and Zarrin, decided to leave the first band of Gypsy rovers to roam all the lands, searching for others of their kind. Wandering this way and that, and getting in and out of more forms of trouble than even most Rom could name, the two brothers finally ended up in the land of the pharaohs. Being who they were, Zarrin and Abram decided it would be a proper gesture of the respect they felt for all stuffy, overblown, sedentary gaje to steal the pharaoh's

ceremonial beard. While they were at it, they thought they might as well acquire one of the ancient tomes of knowledge that particular pharaoh was always consulting ...

Well, neither Abram nor Zarrin shared their father's ability to grow fur and fangs, but they were both quite adept at spotting such types, whether in human or wolf form. So, when they spotted two young women gliding around the market, sniffing at the dates and melons, the siblings nudged each other and headed toward the two women. The women, Ovilla and Piete, who also happened to be twins, sniffed at Abram and Zarrin and knew them for kin folk.

"Run with us!" Ovilla challenged with a growl.

"Stride with us over silent sands," Piete called.

And of course the brothers did. But it wasn't long before the rhythmic strides of the sisters and the pounding heat of the desert began to wear on Abram and Zarrin. Yet the sisters urged them on.

"Stride! Stride! Stride unto the next level!" they called. And as the wind picked up and the brothers' brains began to burn, the rhythm of their feet pounded them into the ecstasy of the running soul.

Hours passed, and the brothers awoke in the arms of their new-found lovers.

"Where did you learn that?" Abram asked as Ovilla licked the sweat from his cheeks.

"Is there more?" Zarrin asked, while stroking his hands through Piete's glossy fur.

"There's more, but we can't get at it," Ovilla said. "This part we stole from old scraggle-beard, the pharaoh. Piete was in his bedchamber once and read it in his big book, but she hasn't been asked back."

"Yip!" answered Piete, biting at Ovilla's flanks.

"Well, this works out just fine, because we want to check out one of the pharaoh's books, and it sounds like that's the one!" said Zarrin.

In accord, the four lovers returned to the city and schemed throughout the night. In the morning Zarrin, who was a fine-looking man with deep chocolate skin and delicate features, disguised himself, with the help of the two werewolves, as a maiden new to the court of the pharaoh. With kohl upon his eyes and berries staining his cheeks and lips, Zarrin was the very image of feminine

Werewolves and Gypsy Powers

Garou Gypsies are not able to use Blood Affinities. Apparently, when they take on their full lupine nature and become one of the shape shifters, the altered chemistry of the Blood can no longer grant such abilities. Roman werewolves can, however, make use of draba just as they do talismans. Skills not directly granted by the Blood, such as Bujo and the Talith, are also available to Garou Rom.

beauty. It was all Abram could do to keep from laughing as he escorted his "little sister" to the court.

With the information supplied by Ovilla and Piete, Zarrin had little difficulty catching the roving eye of the pharaoh. In no time, he stood within the pharaoh's open bedchamber among the almonster and silk. The pharaoh himself prepared the relaxing wine for his new conquest.

Leaning forward to embrace the pharaoh, Zarrin took the opportunity to slip into the jug of wine a packet of herbs he and Abram had learned to employ. Batting his long lashes, Zarrin told the pharaoh how his overwhelming masculine presence made Zarrin's heart flutter and his knees quake.

The pharaoh, greasy beard and ample stomach quivering in tandem rhythms of lust, responded, "Well then, you must drink of this honeyed wine so that you shall not faint away."

"You too, my pharaoh. For I could not drink alone in such august company," Zarrin said, glancing up at the large tome placed prominently on an ivory stand.

Toasting each other, the two drank down the wine, sip for sip, gulp for gulp. After a few minutes the pharaoh's tiny eyes slipped shut and his mouth sagged open, and Zarrin, whose Blood protected him from the concoction, was off like a shot. Gathering the tome into his arms and slipping the ratty beard from the pharaoh's fat face, Zarrin put on the pharaoh's clothes. Affixing beard to face and pillow to stomach, Zarrin left the naked, snoring pharaoh, striding imperially from the bedchamber, and thence from the court.

The Rebel Yell

While a number of Gircu tribes have their own tales about this legendary noise, the Children of Sarath claim that the rebel yell of the Southern soldiers in the American Civil War was actually a less effective variation of the Howl of Fear. As the story goes, early in the conflict, a kumpania of Rom on tour spied some Yanks and rebs whaling away at each other. Immediately, the Rom began betting amongst themselves on various outcomes. Prella, the Lupine Gypsy of the kumpania, waited until the Yanks started to really bear the tar out of the rebs.

When the odds against the rebs were getting up to impossible, she placed her bet on the boys in gray, then stepped away to join the group. Letting loose with her Howl of Fear, she so scared the Yankees that they dropped their weapons and ran, convinced they were about to be killed by the mystical rebels. The rebels were too shocked to know exactly what had happened, but they realized the power in the eerie sound and immediately began copying it. Although not as effective as the Gypsy Prella's howl, the yell was disturbing on its own merits.

Continuing on their tour, Prell and the rest of the kumpania decided they would drop by one of the Northern encampments and offer to sell the secret of the rebel yell to whoever was in charge. When they finally found a likely looking one at Maryland way, Prell and Finnin, in Urme along for the ride, marched right up to the general's tent claiming information of great importance about the rebels, looking askance at the Gypsies' clothes and Prell's dark complexion. The guard was not easily convinced of their "legation." But Finnin's clever tongue got them in.

Inside, they spoke with a General McClellan. Launching into their prearranged spiel, Prella and Finnin told of the magical powers of the mysterious rebel yell, an noise so fearsome it would soon turn whole regiments of seasoned veterans into quaking boys wanting only their mothers' skirts. As a finish to their tale, Prell and Finnin offered to teach an even more powerful yell to McClellan's men. But McClellan would have none of it. Intimidated at the mere suggestion that men in his command could behave in such a manner, McClellan had the two Gypsies arrested as spies.

Of course Prell and Finnin, being Rom, had no trouble escaping the clutches of the Yankees. But now Prell had a hunc to pick with the Yanks. With the aid of her kumpania, Prella moved up and down the Eastern states, begging McClellan's trust. Everywhere he went, McClellan heard bone-chilling howls that soon had him so unnerved that he clutched his troops about him as an old woman clutches her shawl. And everywhere the Northern troops fought, the rebel yell rose to greet them.

When Prella thought the moment was right, she approached McClellan once again. This time he agreed to give Prell anything she wished for the information he had once scoffed at. Laughing to herself, Prell instructed the general to pay three horses, two chickens, and a bar of gold in return for the secret of the "mystic howl." Prella then said that she must immediately take the horses, chickens and gold to the man who would teach McClellan the howl, and that McClellan must give her a letter granting her ownership of the items in exchange for the secret of the rebel yell. After agreeing where the three would meet for the lesson, and demonstrating the signal, McClellan should give (a howl) to tell them all was clear. Prella is said to have sent the letter on to McClellan's superior, the Northern president.

The night of the meeting, the kumpania laughed and laughed as they watched the statted peacock of a general try to explain why he stood alone on a hill, howling softly into the night air.

In years to come, the new family of Gypsies grew and grew, and many were its adventures. But this is the story of the Children of Sarrath's birth and how they found the Book of the Dead.

Since the time of the first Lupine family of Rom, the Gypsies have kept in fairly close contact with the Garou, most particularly those of the Silent Strider tribe, to which almost all Gypsy werewolves belong. However, the vast majority of the Children of Sarrath are made up of those Rom kin to the werewolves. Only perhaps ten percent of the family are actually werewolves themselves.

Although the human Rom of this family are sympathetic to the problems and perspective of their Garou brethren, the humans most definitely think that they have the inside track on reality and the world. Freed from all the moaning and groaning and whining of the werewolves, the Children of Sarrath feel they have the best of both worlds. After all, they have the passion and fierceness of their lupine relations and they are privy to Gypsy knowledge and powers. In addition, both the Rom and the Striders really know how to party, and the Children of Sarrath have freely combined this mish-mash of viewpoints, knowledge, power and riotous capability to unleash a wickedly powerful brew.

The Children of Sarrath most often organize their family groupings into carnivals or circuses. Such small road shows usually travel a regular circuit (as do most other traveling bands of Rom), performing for the gaje rubes, who practically beg to have their money taken. These carnivals usually set up outside a small town or city and then wait for the gaje to come running. When in cities, the various members of a carnival often do street performing in seedier sections or set up small shows that range from "artistic dancing" to cock fights to bujo set-ups to anything that will turn a fast buck.

Whenever the Lupines are around gaje, however, they are perpetually on the look-out for more than just an opportunity to play with the gaje's minds and money. For many years now, the members of Lupine carnivals have also been scouting for lost Garou cubs. In fact, the Lupine Gypsies have proven remarkably adept at discovering and spirited away such youths. These children are raised by the carnival until they reach puberty, at which point they are normally turned over to the

Silent Striders for initiation into their particular Garou tribe. The rescue of these lost Garou cubs is probably the one kernel of truth in all the gaje legends of Gypsy child-thieving. After all, normally the Rom want nothing to do with the weak-blooded gaje or their get.

As kin to the werewolves, the Children of Sarrath are aware of the Veil and do not suffer any form of derangement when faced with a werewolf. Certain members of this family also have the Blood Affinity known as the Spirit of the Wolf. This ability seems to rely on a combination of both Gypsy and Garou Blood and can only be learned by those Rom who are members of the Lupine family.

Note: All Family powers are considered Blood Affinities for purposes of character creation (see Chapter two for more information on cost).

Family Skill: Spirit of the Wolf

The Lupine Gypsy clan has developed a set of Blood Affinities not available to other Gypsies. These can be bought like any other Blood Affinities.

Level One: The Gypsy can begin to emulate the speed of the Garou. By spending a point of Willpower, the character can take a second full action in the turn, just as werewolves get extra actions by spending Rage. However, Gypsies can only spend one point of Willpower per turn.

Level Two: At this level, the Rom can grant other humans the ability to look past the Veil and avoid being deranged by the sight of a werewolf. The Rom must roll her Spirit of the Wolf + Manipulation (difficulty of 8). The number of successes achieved indicates the number of people for whom the Gypsy can lift the Veil in that particular scene.

Level Three: By spending one point of Willpower, the Rom may attempt to grow lupine claws. Such claws do aggravated damage to Garou and vampires alike, and are also able to affect other supernatural creatures (including spirits, wraiths and faeries). In order to grow the claws of the wolf, the Rom must make a Brawl + Stamina roll (difficulty of 7). The claws last for one scene and do aggravated damage.

Level Four: Here the Gypsy is able to reach into the legacy of his lupine blood and use any one level one or two Silent Strider or Homid Gift (see *Werewolf: The Apocalypse*) as if he were a full-fledged Garou. The Gift works exactly as explained for a true werewolf.

Level Five: The Gypsy is now able to produce the Howl of Fear. This eerie, high-pitched shriek costs the Rom one point of Willpower to perform, but all those hearing the strange sound must make a resisted roll against its effects using Wits + Intimidation (difficulty of the Gypsy's Willpower + Blood Purity). Any who fail this contest, including vampires and all other-than-human types, are seized with fear and flee if at all possible. Those who successfully resist and do not flee still receive 2 less dice than normal to all attacks against the Gypsy and her allies.

The Ravnos

Reality used to be a friend of mine

PM Dawn, "The Utopian Experience"

The many small branches of the Ravnos family have been enmeshed in the World of Darkness since Daenna first bit into the Fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. Guardians of Kooserin, the Seed of Earthly Awakening, the Ravnos have ever walked a narrow path between the blood-velvet darkness of the undead world and the harsh bloodshot mornings of human awakening. Such a path is not easily trod, and too many Ravnos have taken one step too far, plummeting into addiction and undying pain.

Branches of the Ravnos family wander throughout Europe and the Americas, but their greatest concentration has always been in and around the Balkans and the area now known as Eastern Europe. There the roots of the Ravnos family tree plunge deep.

The Ravnos say that Daenna returned but once to the Ivory City in the days following her transfiguration. From that journey returned she with another sort of seed, and from that seed were born the Ravnos. Or so the story is told.

On the night of her wild flight with Sarnath from the Ivory City, the newly empowered Daenna grieved mightily for her beloved shilmule husband. Determined to discover the truth of his fate,



Daenna turned back on her path, leaving her brother Sarrath to await her return. Searching for Dracian, Daenna returned to the smoldering ruins of their former home, still warm with the embers of fire and the memories of her heart. Heedless of any possible danger, Daenna threw wide the gates to her senses and sent her soul searching for any trace of her shilmulo husband.

Some say she stood among the ashes for hours, others say for days, but finally one tendril of her glorious mind brushed against the least vestige of her husband's form. Searching grimly in the dirt and ashes, Daenna finally spotted a small rock encrusted with the tarnished stains of Dracian's once-flowing blood: all that remained of her beloved.

After the first wave of tears that washed over her had passed, Daenna took the stone and fled the city for good.

Years passed and Daenna moved among the humans of the world with a passion unequalled by other mortals. As her children grew in number, the mother of us all looked carefully on them, from the youngest babe to the oldest grandmother, until she found one man among all her children who carried in him a passion almost the equal of Daenna's. The man's name was Ravnos, and to him Daenna passed her husband's legacy. Placing the blooded stone on Ravnos' tongue, Daenna bit her own tongue through before kissing him fully on the mouth. Willing the ancient blood to work its magic, Daenna lifted up her knife and plunged the blade into Ravnos' breast, holding him tightly as she felt his life's Blood ebb and wane and then strengthen again in her embrace.

Thus did Daenna and her husband create their only child, and from him sprung the shilmulo known to the other vampires as Ravnos. But Ravnos had children of his own before Daenna chose him to be transformed, and these children protected their father as all who are family protect each other. Some of these children Ravnos in turn transformed into beings like himself, but most he left alive and human. And from these are the Ravnos truly descended. Or so it was told to me and to my mother before me.

Little is known, even by the Ravnos, of their family's early history. The Ravnos have long been part of Gypsy society, even while remaining sepa-

rate from it. Over the years, the Ravnos family spread and became more and more aware of the vampire politics running under the doings of the mortals, as tidal currents run beneath seemingly calm waters. But Ravnos and those of his children he made shilmulo didn't care much for the politics of the Children of Caine. Sure, some of it was fun, and the vampires were always easy marks, for they took themselves so very seriously, but such grand scheming as went on amongst most of the Cainites was just not for Ravnos and his relations.

The human Ravnos tend to live in extremes, even for the Rom. Passions burn brightly, and they hold their live-for-the-moment attitude as dear as the gaje clutch their remote controls. But the other side of this coin, and perhaps the driving force behind their determination to reach new heights of head-spinning intoxications and trickery, arises from two sources. The first of these threats stems from within the family itself. The Ravnos family is named for the first shilmulo who walked in their midst as a Rom. Since then, the number of Romani vampires has grown, and all are members of the Ravnos family. Even if a Gypsy from another family is taken by a Ravnos in the *tumumos*, the Embrace, she is from that time forth a member of the Ravnos.

These vampires can seek any of the Ravnos family for aid whenever necessary. As such, the Ravnos are careful that their homes, vans, trailers and wagons have at least one place where no sunlight can ever reach. Sometimes a particular shilmulo will adopt a *kumpania* and travel with it, too often feeding on his own kin. Ravnos vampires who feed on Gypsies have to fight their own form of addiction, as the Abilities they lost in the Embrace flood back to them while the Romani Blood again flows in their unliving veins. Similarly, many young Ravnos get off on drinking the blood of the shilmulo, becoming addicted to the power and highs the shilmulo blood grants. But most Ravnos fear the attentions and ministrations of their vampiric kin.

Many are the stories of whole *kumpaniyi* destroyed by a vampire or vampires too power drunk on Gypsy Blood to keep from slaughtering their own people. Other Ravnos worry that too many young Rom will see immortality in their grasp and sell their Blood for the chance to walk the path of the shilmulo. For every Gypsy who takes this path,

either by choice or by force, another small thread in the Romani tapestry is torn away. There can be only so many torn threads before the tapestry begins to unravel. In such transformations the Ravnos could manage what the gaje have been so far unable to accomplish, the death of the Ravnos family, and perhaps all Gypsies.

The second onus the Ravnos people bear is the ever-present threat of slavery and genocide by the gaje, which always seems to be, at best, barely held in check. Gaje persecution affects all the Rom, but the Ravnos seem to have a knack for being in places where Gypsy persecution reaches fever pitch (or are particularly targeted by other, less visible enemies).

In Romania for many, many years, the Ravnos (along with the Phuri Dae) were enslaved by the other peoples of that land and those nearby. This slavery persisted, it is said, until the Ravnos shilmulo Durga Syn, once a priestess to the ancestors of the very people who now enslaved the Rom, led the Ravnos and Phuri Dae in revolt against those in power. Although the Gypsies were small in number compared to their enslavers, the combined power of their will, their magic, and their knowledge of the true workings of the world enabled the Gypsies and their allies to force the government to free them.

Of course the Gypsies' freedom only increased the fear and loathing of their former owners and new neighbors. The Phuri Dae realized the danger in such reactions and attempted to fade into the background of the world, staying always on the edges of gaje society. Not so the Ravnos.

Emboldened by their success, and just plain fed up with their role as mama's boys and bootlickers to the gaje, many of the Ravnos family plunged into the cities and towns of Eastern Europe and the Middle East with a vengeance. Masters of trickery and the con game, the Ravnos easily took over many of the black market activities in the area, particularly gambling, drugs and prostitution. Simultaneously, many Ravnos turned begging into an art, covering themselves in insect-infested rags, pretending deformities, and otherwise making themselves obnoxious while the gaje gave them money for their antics.

Hearing the gaje remark on how pathetic and shiftless the Rom are, the Ravnos have to laugh.

After all, the Rom know they are actually mocking the cloying gaje, who so cling to their material possessions. It's just a pity the gaje aren't able to pick up on the joke. Then again, they probably wouldn't appreciate it. Gaje are like that.

Surviving both the attempted genocide of the Holocaust and an earlier attempt at the same in Albania, the Rom of Eastern Europe today once again face acute and active loathing by the gaje. This loathing has recently begun to turn more and more violent, especially in Germany, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and, of course, Romania. Adding to the hatred is the Ravnos' feud with the Tsurara. Violent Romani gangs from both families now walk the streets of many European cities, as well as several American cities (particularly Miami, New York and Los Angeles). The extreme violence of these kumpaniyi gangs, directed against Gypsy and gaje alike, only fuels the fires of the gaje's fear and hatred.

Yet, as always, the Ravnos Gypsies have adopted an optimistic slant on the growing persecution. Most feel the grand upswellings of hatred in this century signal the coming of the Convergence, which may well be the wildest party of the millennia, and in which they are sure they will be the guests of honor.

Many Ravnos have extremely good connections to their shilmulo kin. Through such Kindred the human Ravnos may gain a variety of advantages. Such advantages range from safe conduct through the middle of a vampiric battleground to information on current vampire politics to access to vampire blood and other drugs to feed any habits. (Granted, this last is, at best, a questionable "advantage.")

Additionally, a human Ravnos can put out the word when she needs help from her vampiric kin. The actual shilmulo response to such a call varies widely (and is up to the Storyteller), but in general the player should roll a Charisma + Kindred Lore (difficulty determined by the Storyteller), with the number of successes determining how quickly help arrives. However, any Ravnos calling on one of her shilmulo cousins better either make it worth the vampire's while or prove that she is indeed in dire straits. It doesn't do to irk such creatures, as family loyalty only goes so far with a shilmulo.

A Ravnos also is likely to have at least a few connections in the underground economy of any city she passes through. When entering a new city, the Ravnos should make a Charisma + Area Knowledge (black markets) roll. The difficulty varies with the city and should be determined by the Storyteller.

The Urmen

*Wave after wave, each mightier than the last
'Til last, a ninth one, gathering half the deep
And full of voices, slowly rose and plunged
Roaring, and all the wave was in a flame*

— Lord Alfred Tennyson, "The Coming of Arthur"

The Urmen are perhaps the most eccentric of all the families of power. They are also by far the smallest in number, with only three modern branches thought to be extant, one of these may have slipped between the cracks of the worlds into the realm of Arcadia. The Phuri Dae speak with concern of the Pestralla branch, who perhaps 50 years ago disappeared amongst the craggy heights and coldest depths of the Scottish mountain country. This concern is heightened by both their fear that the Urmen are in danger of disappearing entirely and by their perhaps even-greater concern that a member of the Pestralla is the current Guardian of Jalomasin, the Seed of Stars, the Seed traditionally held by the Urmen.

While certainly of the Blood, and perhaps possessed of an even more rarefied Blood than the other families, the Urmen are odd, even for Gypsies. The Urmen are the Gypsies who most ally themselves with the Seelie court and the legions of faerie, unsettling and uncertain allies at best. Rumors have always circulated among the other families of power that the Urmens' loyalties may be skewed in favor of their Arcadian friends. This suspicion has plagued the Urmen since Daenna brought the first of her fey children into the burning fires of the Romani hearths.

Long ago, in a time when Daenna still fitted among her children, as a mother hen clucks at her chicks, she returned to a kumpania camped high in the Transylvanian countryside.

"Have you no shawl and blanket for one who has long wandered, my children?" she asked, entering the firelight.

Scurrying in their excitement, for all Rom still recognized the mother of us all in that long-ago, forever time, the Gypsies did as they were told.

"Here! We bring you our finest blanket and shawl," the eldest of them said as he handed Daenna the items of softest goat's hair.

"Yes, yes, these are fine, my young ones," Daenna murmured.

It was then the first of the Rom felt a tugging on her sleeve. Looking down, Daenna spied a young scrap of a Rom staring determinedly upward. "If you are the mother of us all, why is your hair black, and why are your teeth still there? You do not look like a mother's mother," he finished.

Laughing, Daenna looked down on the sharp-eyed youth known as Dmitri. "That is clever of you, but things are not always how they appear. You see this shawl? It looks to be one piece, one beautiful shawl, does it not?"

When Dmitri nodded in grave agreement Daenna continued. "But, look closer. Do you see this thread trailing here?" As Daenna spoke she began to rapidly pull on the errant thread. Pulling and pulling, she soon had turned the lovely shawl into a ragged pile of threads. "Now what do you see, little Dmitri?" she asked.

"An awful big mess... You're gonna be in trouble now," he said solemnly, for Dmitri did not like to see people whipped.

"Ah, that is one way to look on this pile of raggle-taggle threads, Dmitri. But there are others. Many others." As Daenna's voice blanketed the air, all else was silence in the snowy camp. "I see these threads differently. In fact, I view them as I view my children, each one a raggle-taggle thread. And when I weave together some of the threads, I find myself with a kumpania, perhaps a family. A few more, and then some more, each one different in color and texture, flavor and feel, and soon what I see is the Rom. Perhaps this thread is yours, Dmitri."

Dropping the reweven threads into her lap, Daenna reached for the blanket. "And here is yet another pattern. In this one I see all the true peoples of the world. Here are the Rom, here the humans of all races. This dark band I believe to be the shilmulo, and this the warriors of Gara. Others I see, too numerous to count, yet there is one I see that goes missing from both of these workings,



shawl and blanket, Roman and World, or nearly so. It is a thread of beauty and power, and as with all the threads, is needed to play its part."

With that, Daenna reached into her bag and brought forth a spool of golden thread. That thread she wound carefully into the pattern of both shawl and blanket. When she had finished her task Daenna stood once more and handed the items to Dmitri. "Sleep wrapped in these tonight, and be sure that you are covered from tip to toe," she told him.

That very night Dmitri disappeared, although the blanket and shawl were found on the ground. Nine nines of months later, Dmitri returned to his family, and with him he brought nine children. These children were fey and strange, with long faces and hands, and beautiful black hair shot through with silver.

And they were the first of the Urmen.

Since that time the Urmen have numbered more than nine branches of their family. The Urmen are convinced that the Rom are to be the midwives to the Seelie court's rebirth into the physical world at the

Convergence. In preparation for this wondrous rebirth, the Urmen, who sometimes refer to themselves as the Minions of the Moon or the servants of Alako, are looking to find a way to increase the mana, the magical energies of the world, which have been diminished for so very long. At the Convergence, claim the Urmen, the chosen Rom will usher in the faeries, and the Ninth Wave (the faerie army) will ride forth from Arcadia in a sweeping flood of magic and rebirth.

Of the two known branches of Urmen, the family now traveling through Russia and the Slavic countries, wracked by the return of the vampire Baba Yaga and social upheaval, is in severe danger from many forces. The settled natives are becoming even more hostile to Gypsies. Most particularly rumors of enforced sterilization procedures are once again erupting, and the Rom fear a concerted effort on the part of the entrenched medical establishment could destroy at least one branch of the already withered family.

The Urmen take such increased abuses as a sign that the Convergence is near and that certain powerful parties do not want the Rom to be able to

play their role when the time finally does arrive. This is certainly one area on which the families of power agree. However, the Baroshkin Urmen have responded to the renewed persecutions by becoming ever-more visible, a tactic the other Rom see as potentially suicidal.

But when confronted, the Urmen merely talk of tapestries, weavings and new perspectives. Meanwhile, the final known Urme branch spends much time gamboling among the islands and waters near Greece. When asked, they reply that they are looking for signs of the Ninth Wave.

All Blood members of the Urme family of Rom have at least some Seelie blood mingling with the Romani Blood in their veins. The intoxication of the faerie blood keeps the Urmen from ever becoming quite as wholeheartedly attuned to the Romani Blood, and thus an Urme can never have a Blood Purity level higher than four. However, members of this family are capable of certain tricks and powers inaccessible to all others, save the faeries themselves.

Faerie Threads

The Affinities granted humans by faerie blood are not ever controlled by mortal will. Instead, each individual Urme Rom capable of reaching this part of her soul has her own unique peccadillo, her own thread of magic that she can weave into the tapestry of reality. Such abilities run a wide gamut, and Storytellers and players are encouraged to come up with unusual Affinities, although all Affinities should have an element of chaos in them. It is important that the Storyteller and player make certain the power of the Affinity is not out of balance with other Affinities.

The possibilities for such magical threads, as the Urmen see them, could include the ability to call forth an Urme spirit or faerie to aid the Gypsy. Or perhaps the Gypsy is able to follow the paths of faerie which still crisscross the lands of the Earth, enabling the Gypsy and those in physical contact with her to step on and off these paths anywhere in the world. Such a Gypsy could travel from an ancient faerie cave in Greece to a faerie ring in New York in three blinks of an eye. A third possibility is that the Gypsy can sing songs of great beauty and power, so any nearby spirits who hear her music become very enamored of the Gypsy, and thus, they will do her a favor or defend her from attack.

For all such abilities, the Gypsy can only use one faerie thread per story for each level of faerie threads she possesses. For example, if Sammilla is an Urme Gypsy with three dots of faerie threads, she can use her ability to cause all those in her sight without Romani Blood to become suddenly drunk up to three times in a particular story. Those affected by her power must make a Will-power roll (difficulty of 7) in order to take any action. They must then continue to make Will-power rolls to take any actions for the duration of the scene.

The Urme must spend one point of Willpower to activate her family Affinity. If the Gypsy botches while using this Affinity, some wild effect, normally detrimental to the Gypsy, occurs. The Storyteller should feel free to devise such effects when botches occur.

Level One: The Urme can recognize changelings and other disguised faeries when he comes across them. The Gypsy may choose one special ability. This ability can be used once per story.

Level Two: The Urme can use her special ability up to twice per story.

Level Three: The Urme can use her Affinity up to three times per story. On a successful Perception + Faerie Threads roll (difficulty varies), the Gypsy can also determine if a faerie was recently present or if an object is of faerie workmanship.

Level Four: The Urme may use her Affinity up to four times per story.

Level Five: The Gypsy may use her Affinity up to five times per story.

The Phuri Dae

As for the unbelievers, their works are as a mirage in a spacious plain which the man athirst supposes to be water, till, when he comes to it, he finds it is nothing.

— The Koran, 24:39

Children of Daenna in spirit as well as Blood, the Phuri Dae are most closely associated with the Seeds of Knowledge. There is an ongoing debate among the Phuri Dae as to whether their family includes only the traditional Guardian of Eiveland, the Seed of Brightest Waters, or if one of their number also guards Bonnerin, the Seed of the Balanced Scale. This is actually only a more-concrete manifestation of the turmoil within the

Phuri Dae as to whether they represent the epitome of all Rom, or are only an important part of the whole.

If they are only a single, albeit necessary, component, then it is generally said that some individual kumpania will jumble together to form a kinetic whole, a jump-start on the evolutionary train, becoming more than the sum of their flesh and spirit and Blood. Such a kumpania would surely play an important part, perhaps the starring role, at the Convergence.

This line of thinking is certainly not held by the conservative members of the Phuri Dae, who have occasionally been sneered at by others of their kind as the stuffed shirts and self-important seers of the Rom. Those accusing the Phuri Dae claim that having to carry such a heavy burden of knowledge and responsibility has bowed their spiritual backs and crushed their sense of the possible. The disenfranchised among the Dae are the only ones who feel the sting of such words, and it only makes them redouble their efforts to lance the boil of disinformation and doggerel that so infects the gaze as a whole.

Those Rom more invested in their anointed role as holders of all knowledge worth knowing doggedly maintain the dogma that, as the epitome of Daenna's children in both spirit and Blood, the Phuri Dae will most certainly be the ones to minister at the Convergence. As such, say the cockier Dae, the carefully guarded knowledge of those Rom in the present and the Seeds, now wedded in a yet-barren union, will spring to life as the first fertile drops from the spirit realm touch the unhiving egg of dry materialism.

In the recombining of spirit and body, when the elements—earth, air, fire and water—are empowered to transcend into some new reality we can only now call spirit, we will see the ultimate expression of the soul. But for now, these Rom wait and watch in the stagnation they term patience, while other families play a far more active role in transforming the world.

But such entropy has not afflicted all the Phuri Dae. Many of the younger members, and certain American branches in particular, say that the Phuri Dae must do more than watch and wait for the so-called Convergence. Instead, they as-



The Big Boat Ride

Too early for the rainbow

Too early for the dove

These are the final days

This is the flood

— Leonard Cohen, "The Gypsy's Wife"

If you've heard this one before shut up and listen anyway, 'cause you're sure to have heard it wrong. I at least haven't heard it my way and my way's best because that's how it *has* to be: see things.

Well, before us Phoni folks were sanctified and consecrated, is the packet of the Ring, but that picture label was ever slipped on us by our supposedly libelless selves, there was a woman, a powerful drabarne, named Noahe.

Well Noahe was a busy body, are I nose to the ground, tap on the phone snapper. But Noahe also had the Sight, so she could really get off on some serious mind tripping—time-sipping, voyeurism.

So one day while Noahe was out for a psychic jaunt up and down the threads of time, she found one whopper of a tangle. Pausing to consider what could cause such a jam, Noahe looked closer at the time trap. Stunned to see into its center, Noahe started picking at the tangle, ignoring her mother's advice about picking at strange time threads—you don't know when they've seen it, but she couldn't figure it out. Then she got the bright idea to jump the jam and slide backwards toward the start. It was then she found a fellow traveler—a fishy, swimmy, floppy spirit—tripping among the threads, causing the twist-up.

Being a sorry (and lusty) gypsy with curiosity, Noahe freed the scaly fellow of the white webbing of perhaps this was merely the result of snuffing a mite too much mugwort. But before Noahe could check back into her body, the fish-fellow swallowed her whole. Gulp! Bummer.

But not really. For inside its time-trotting tummy was Knowledge, ribs and ribs of it, and guess what's what stuff, which Noahe eagerly devoured. (Too bad she didn't have any other mother's tarts since.) Noahe gobbled down twenty-three ribs, but the final rib she ate felt like it was looking to be about disasters, and disasters gave Noahe indigestion.

Finding her way out the back door, Noahe slipped back to her very own home body, tucking the last rib with her.

Well, after she Noahe had digested the fish's filler of soul, Noahe decided it was time for her medicine. Going back to her own head's back pantry and freezer, Noahe ate the last rib with a bang. She discovered plans in the works to flush out her very own section of the universe, get rid of it, sort of the excess human blockage. Not that Noahe minded a good world scrubbing, enema—but she'd prefer not to be among the jet-sensed muck and guck. So, to reward, Noahe gathered her family and her family's family together and told them all of her fishing trip. She also told them some of the many many things she had learned from her fillet, but that's not this story. If you want to, if one would have to, they're the whole bottle, not just pass me one watered-down scotch.

Anyway, once the right tide was rolled, the Ring got busy. They built a really big boat right there in the mountains and passed the word to other families and kamps in a warm and comfortable way. Then they gathered up their pigs and cows and chickens and dogs, necks down water and piled into their party barge.

Weeks passed, gulls laughed, and then came the cosmic plumber. Whee.

For this day the gypsies still steamed about not getting word of this little Earth scrubbing. So, of course, they lay claim to Noahe and give the flood to their great big daddy of a papergod. Then they screw the story up even further. But what can you expect from a bunch of gee-



sert, the Phuri Dae must plunge into the gaje world's doings, using their knowledge of the true workings of the world, the dirty errata of reality behind the stage flats of normalcy, to tear off the veil of scientific assurance that so many people maintain. Only by expanding the understanding of all those who share this earth can the Rom prepare the world for the Convergence and the mind-bending possibilities to come

Our view of the Convergence and our role among the gaje cause great fear and consternation among the rest of the Rom. They know the vampires, especially those belonging to the pow-wow known as the Camarilla, would turn a great deal of energy and resources toward destroying us should the Masquerade (the "no monsters" placebo-fiction bottle they feed to the gaje) be actively threatened. So too would many of the werewolves rage at any of us who would dare to expose them to the harsh light of open existence. At least they have the gaje on their side.

The gaje cling tenaciously to their anti-magical, pro-science, all explainable, no-monsters-

in-the-closets script, and it will take some major shredding and twisting to take that stuffed-animal-of-a-reality away from them. All in all, not an easy assignment. But a growing number of us Phuri Dae are willing to take it on, extra credit or no.

Not to say we're suicidal, such reality expansion is most often accomplished with some subtlety. The shocked mind too often shrinks in denial rather than expanding with sudden comprehension.

Most of us carefully show the world magic — and then deny it; perhaps by presenting a play depicting the role of the Garou in the world, and then dismissing it as fancy. Traveling families and *kumpaniyi* of Gypsies set up and run strange games where people can play at being vampires in the midst of unsuspecting humans — but it's only make-believe, right?

Such conditioning, the thinking goes, will prepare at least some gaje for the expanded realities of the Convergence and the reconceptualizing that that transformation will require. Those gaje who truly seem to recognize the truth-in-possibil-

ity of our games and shows may find themselves traveling farther into the rabbit warren of realities we Rom so freely travel. We watch out for those gaje (and in some cases, those shilmulo and werecreatures) ready to be nudged along, whose minds are flexible and will not shatter in madness.

When we spot such a mental contortionist we often invite her to learn more, presenting private showings and telling stranger and truer tales, even inviting the gaje to travel with our kumpania. If the gaje has a particularly flexible mind, we will go all the way, encouraging her to pry away at the shiny plastic coating of the sugar-dipped placebo world, to pop the balloons of censored reality and watch the pieces fly. To experience the fullness of the many layered, vinegar-sweet universe ..."

Through such converts, allegedly including Byron, Blake and Lovecraft, the Rom have achieved greater influence in gaje thinking. Many such gaje go on to write, produce and develop various pieces of "fiction" that actually present glimpses of the truth beneath surface reality. Movies, books, games, TV programs, tabloids and all the cacophony of mass media now have nuggets of truth buried among the fuzzy blur of banality and drivel that is their normal fare. Thus does their tactic of truth-by-denial show-and-tell spread its influence and stretch the limits of the gaje's world.

Despite the fictional presentations and retractions, these tactics have begun to draw the attention of certain mages, vampires, and the occasional Glass Walker werewolf, who do not appreciate the mocking, unraveling tendencies of the pseudo-truths they notice surfacing in the mass media. Although few of these gaje yet know the true source of such information, it cannot be long before they realize who must be behind such deliberate airings of secrets and decide to retaliate as they see fit.

The Phuri Dae trace their specific history back to the time of great flooding. It is said that Noahe was a Rom of truly powerful mind who also happened to be the Guardian of the Seeds of Knowledge (before they were split up). Noahe and her family were forewarned about a plot to destroy the people of that land (in particular the Gypsies).

In response, Noahe built a great ark to save her people, herself and, most importantly, the

Seeds. Many Phuri Dae believe the flood was created by certain mages bent on destroying Noahe and the other Romani because they feared the Gypsies' powers and perhaps even desired the Seeds. But others say it was just a werewolf scheme to rid the world of some particularly disgusting gaje ensconced in the same land as Noahe and her people.

Whatever the cause, the Phuri Dae escaped with their knowledge, and since that time, the family have felt that they are the especial guardians and lore keepers among the world's chosen. Noahe's demonstration of the usefulness of both magic and the Sight also set the example for much of the Phuri Dae.

Today the Phuri Dae believe the world is preparing for an even-bigger cleansing, perhaps through a great flood of reality-expanding knowledge. Although a great number of Phuri Dae now live and travel in North America, many still reside in Europe and the Middle East. In all areas, persecution is increasing as governments attempt to rigidly control both knowledge and power in their countries.

Ever-suspicious of the Gypsies and their rejection of conventional authority, certain European governments have stepped up programs of sterilization and systematic persecution and ejection of the Rom. Still others attempt to steal the Gypsies' children away, claiming all Rom to be unfit parents by definition. The same governments, and others less willing to actively persecute the Rom, watch in near-silence as Gypsies are barred from stores and attacked in the streets of their cities. After all, they are just Gypsies, not real people, think the officials, walled-off and encased in their houses of whitewashed decay.

The Phuri Dae know such desperation is a signal that the dam built of half-truths and denial is near breaking, but they also fear the effects such policies have on their own culture and families. Every Gypsy sterilized, starved, stoned or stolen means there is one less Rom available to carry the contraband knowledge of the Blood and to chip away at the cracks of conventional gaje thought.

Since the time of Noahe herself the Phuri Dae have been especially adept at the art of learning and manipulating knowledge for their own advantage. Although a somewhat subtle power when

compared to, say, the Lupines' aggressive skills, it has served many of the Phuri Dae well throughout the ages. Known as Patteran (the sign of knowledge and of the Phuri Dae), many of the Phuri Dae possess this gift.

Patteran

Magic is the art of changing consciousness at will
— Starhawk, *The Spiral Path*

All forms of Patteran involve the ability to reach beyond the rigid forms of understanding and learning traditionally relied on by the human mind. The Phuri Dae describe Patteran as the Affinity of the shifting mind. Those who possess such an Affinity are not limited to one or two patterns of thinking, which their brains stumbled onto and decided were convenient enough. Instead, they are free to consciously choose to see the world on a multitude of levels.

It costs one point of Willpower to activate this Affinity.

Level One — Eyes of the Child: With this ability the Rom is able to take a fresh look at a problem she finds troubling, whether that problem is as simple as the answer to a riddle or as complicated as attempting to find the proper words to soothe a gibbering lunatic. This Affinity does not bestow the answer on the Rom "from on high," but it can give the Gypsy an insight she may otherwise have overlooked. For example, the Phuri Dae trying to calm the lunatic may begin to think how huge and frightening the world is and how awful it is to be a tiny being who could be crushed at any instant. Such an insight is hers to do with as she sees fit. In the case of the riddle, she might realize that there is more than one definition of a particular word in the riddle's clue.

When faced with a problem she can't get a grip on, a player can roll Patteran + Perception (difficulty determined by the Storyteller) to see if she can get another hint. This skill should not be used as a substitute for actual thinking and investigation on the part of the players. The character's mind must be actively engaged (i.e.: she must be giving it the old college try) for this Affinity to function at all. It is up to the Storyteller to determine whether the player is relying too much on

her Affinity. If so, the Storyteller can just tell the character that she can't seem to get in touch with her Affinity right now.

Level Two — Intuitive Understanding: At this level the Rom can read a piece of writing, hear an individual's statement, or otherwise receive a piece of information and, by spending a point of Willpower, the Rom can determine what the author/speaker really meant to convey through his words.

Rom with this Affinity are especially adept at reading through the histories of the gaje and determining how much of the information the author presented is straight fact (as far as the author knew), and how much was colored by his biases. Similarly, this Affinity enables a Rom watching videotaped footage of an event to determine if the pictures shown represent the true story, or if they are mere propaganda and artifice. This cuts down severely on the warping effect of revisionist history for such Rom.

When a character uses this Affinity, the Storyteller should tell the character the actual truth behind the words of the document/statement in question. This does not mean that if a statement is a deliberate lie, the Gypsy will know the real truth, but it does mean he will know the words are lies, and perhaps get some sense of the kind of deception (evasion, substitution, reversal, etc.) the writer/speaker is creating. The intent behind the words is made clear. The Storyteller must use his judgment when determining what information should be gained by the character.

Level Three — Tales of the Blood: This Affinity allows a Rom to tell tales with the specific aim of inspiring in her fellow Rom some quality shown by one or more of their ancestors. For example, the Gypsy might tell the tale of Kordin's Knife Dance on Mount Ararat while her kumpania is hiding from a bunch of Brujah bad boys miffed about the misunderstanding that just led to the torching of one of their pals by the Rom. Such a tale might inspire the Gypsies to fight even harder against what looks to be mighty bad odds (five vampires to five Gypsies).

In order to use this skill, the Gypsy must have at least a few minutes to tell the tale to her fellow Rom. When the Rom wishes to inspire others of her kind, she should make a Patteran + Charisma

roll (difficulty of 7). The number of **SUCCESS**s equals the number of Rom she has inspired. Those inspired receive an extra die on rolls related to the appropriate trait in the next scene. In the example above, the inspired kumpania members would get an additional die to use in their attack rolls when fighting the Brujah. A tale where a Gypsy cleverly talked her way out of a bad situation might add a die to the Gypsy's Charisma or Manipulation for the duration of the scene.

Level Four — Noah's Knot: This Affinity enables a Rom to manipulate the threads of time to do some spiritual fishing. Setting a trap among the threads of time, the Gypsy baits the trap with a piece of information of the type he himself seeks. So, if the Rom is looking for information on the realm of Arcadia, he might offer up a piece of information on the faeries who call themselves mottleds and smoothes and live in the Catskills of New York.

When a player's Romani character goes fishing among the threads of time, the player should roll a Patteran + Appropriate Knowledge — for example, Faerie Lore (difficulty of 8). The number of successes indicates the amount of knowledge the Rom learns. If the player botches the roll, the Rom not only does not learn anything, but he also loses the piece of knowledge with which he baited the trap.

One Success: The Rom learns one specific, useful fact.

Two Successes: One general concept is also learned.

Three Successes: The Rom learns a key piece of information about the subject.

Four Successes: The Rom learns the general history of the subject and immediately adds that to his knowledge skill.

Five Successes: The Rom learns all information he needs to know about the subject on hand.

Level Five — Shadow Walking: At this point the Rom understands the process by which each person creates her own reality so well that she can distance herself, to some extent, from normal reality. By spending a point of Willpower, the Rom is able to loosen her body's ties to the physical reality in which it normally resides. Thus she



can walk the sliver-path of reality the Rom call the Shadowed Path, where the spiritual and physical realms meet.

When walking the shadows, the Gypsy can still perceive both the physical and spirit realms clearly, but she cannot be perceived by any beings currently existing in just one or the other of these worlds unless they make a successful Wits + Occult roll (difficulty of 8)

Because the Rom is still tenuously connected to both realms, she can reach into either world and manipulate objects, communicate, etc. by making a successful Manipulation + Dexterity roll (difficulty of 7). The Gypsy can Shadow Walk for one hour per point of Stamina she possesses.

The Tsurara

*As my mother wept it was then I swore
To take my life as I would a whore
I know I'm better than before
I will not be reconstructed
Just wanna stay right here
On the sunnyside of the street*

The Pogues, "The Sunnyside of the Street"

The Tsurara, or "Knife Tribe," is a new and radical family. First gathered together in the late 1940s by a young Gypsy mage known as Korasca, the Tsurara believe in the superiority of the Rom over all others, and the superiority of the Knife Tribe over all Rom. Believing themselves to be the finely honed epitome of all that the Blood brings the Rom, the Tsurara see their fledgling family as the zenith of the pentagram: the rarefied spirit that forms the highest level of Romani evolution.

Claiming to be the new Guardians of Bonnerin, the Seed of the Balanced Scale, (and in some cases claiming control of all the Seeds), the Tsurara believe the Convergence is just around the corner. They also believe that they shall be the driving blade that slices the strings of power held by all others, but most especially the vampires

The first Tsurara, Korasca, was the only member of his family to survive the genocide of the Holocaust. Bitter and alone, he wandered Europe searching for other isolated Rom like himself. Eventually he met up with a vampire neonate who

told Korasca how she and other Rom had taken part in an uprising at Glodker, one of the Nazi concentration camps. The shilmulo neonate, Trinkka, went into detail, explaining how another shilmulo had Embraced many of the Rom of the camp and how they had then risen against their prisoners, destroying the camp for good.

Although at first gladdened by Trinkka's news, Korasca became more and more horrified as he heard Trinkka speak of the sharing and drinking of blood. Questioning the young vampire, Korasca discovered she and all the others had been drained of their Romani Blood in order to become shilmulo. Disguising his horror at her story, Korasca agreed to guard Trinkka while she slept within the Earth's embrace.

Korasca spent half the day thinking on the new horrors revealed to him by Trinkka. Not only had she spoken so freely of the Blood, but she and the others had freely given away their Blood, their heritage, to be free of the concentration camp. The Rom of the camp had sold their heritage in order to free themselves and save their own skins. To Korasca's way of thinking, Trinkka and the others had committed an even greater form of genocide than the Third Reich by turning against themselves and destroying their own Blood.

Soon Korasca knew what he must do. Taking up a shovel and pick, the traditional weapons of the righteous and downtrodden, Korasca exposed Trinkka to the purifying rays of the sun, thus destroying his first "traitor to the Blood."

Known variously as the Tsurara, the Knife Tribe, and the Slayers, the family begun by Korasca is dedicated to keeping the Romani Blood pure. The family is convinced that when the Convergence arrives, Romani of the true Blood must stand ready to play their crucial role of purification. If the Urmen see the Rom as midwives to a new era, the Slayers view themselves as surgeons wielding a gleaming scalpel.

The Tsurara look forward with fevered imaginings to the time of the Convergence, when they can lash away with the white-hot surgeon's blade, cutting away the impure, cancerous growths, leaving only the truly pure and healthy behind (in this case, only the true Rom and those gaje destined to support them).

Who is pure and who is *marhime*, or impure, is a fiercely debated subject among members of the family, but almost all agree the vampires, and all *Ravnos shilmulo* in particular, must be excised. The Slayers view the *Ravnos shilmulo* as the worst of traitors, and do not even consider them to be Rom, for the vampires sacrifice their Blood for power, and without the Blood, there can be no Rom. Humans of the *Ravnos* family are seen as almost as bad, although the *Tsurara* concede that some of their particularly pure Blood may be salvageable.

Very different from their near-unanimous convictions about the vampires is the debate now thriving among members of the *Tsurara* over the status of the werewolves and their kin. Some insist that werewolves embody the physical rage and power of the Rom and are of the purest Blood, while other members disagree vehemently, saying the werewolves, being part animal, have their own peculiar allegiances and thus cannot be pure Gypsies in both mind and soul. Others point out that they are the children of incest, and sullied by this heritage. Still other *Tsurara* think the Silent Striders and other *Garou*, though not of as pure Blood as the Rom, may still be meant to serve the Rom as guards, just as dogs travel with most *Romani* families (and all *Tsurara kumpaniyi*).

The Slayers agree that Rom must only lie with Rom, so that the Blood can remain as pure as possible. Producing children with a gaje is thus considered a crime against the Blood and carries severe penalties among the *Tsurara*, up to and including death.

The Knife Tribe vigorously encourages its members to hone all Abilities, most especially those tied to the Blood, all branches of the family constantly seek to improve their powers. This is the main reason why the Slayers, although a particularly isolated grouping of families, emphatically encourage young members to go on tour with Gypsies of other families (even *Ravnos*). The elder *Tsurara* see this as the most convenient way to glean information about what the other families (particularly other families of power) are thinking and doing, as well as to enable young Slayers to learn some of the skills peculiar to other families. However, in recent years many young Gypsies have begun refusing to accept youths of the *Tsurara* into their *kumpania*.

When a Slayer is accepted on a tour, she is usually watched very closely for the same reasons the *Tsurara* encourage their young to go on tour. Because of this suspicion, many Slayers pretend to be from a different family, usually a lesser family, in order to gain easier admission to a tour.

The *Tsurara* actively search out all vampires, but most especially *Ravnos*, as they are convinced that destroying all *shilmulo* is a vital cause. The *Tsurara*'s demographics are disproportionately young and male. These Slayers wander from city to city looking for trouble. The most radical of these youths believe that all gaje are fair game, not just to con and steal from, but to kill.

Young Slayers often either shave and tattoo their heads or wear their hair long and unkempt. Many experiment with drugs and other forms of mind-alteration in order to tap into, or heighten, the specific powers of their Blood. Although members of the *Tsurara* are not the only Rom known to fall into this trap, they are the most likely to do so. Some older members of the clan encourage such behavior, claiming the Knife Tribe's mission is important enough to warrant such extreme methods.

Unfortunately for these young Rom, many of these users soon reach the point where they are only able to tap into their Blood-given abilities while using drugs. This sets up a vicious cycle of drug addiction that all too often leads to an early grave for these *Tsurara*, and may eventually lead to the clan's death as well.

Blood Sense

At some point in his work, Korasca discovered that the Blood provided him with a method for discerning both the purity of a Rom's Blood and the blood of others. Over the years Korasca learned how to sense the blood of others and to determine its very nature. In the first few years before his disappearance, Korasca was said to be able to smell a *Ravnos* several miles distant ("reeking of gangrene and poison"). Knowing the advantage such an ability was to his cause, Korasca taught some of the Slayers how to use this ability to know their enemies.

This ability is a strictly guarded skill. Slayers who learn how to sense blood must swear on their own Family that they will not reveal its secret to

any not of the clan. The only Slayer known to have revealed this skill to an outsider (one of the Phuri Dae) was subjected to the Tsurara ritual known as the Cleansing.

This ritual consists of hoisting the subject over a large fire in a spread-eagled position and making small, but deep, cuts at the pulse points (wrists, throat, groin). The Blood of the subject is cleansed by the fire. Normally the ritual ends in death and the body's cremation. Occasionally, if there is a possibility of the traitor repairing the damage to the Rom, the ritual is stopped prior to death and the traitor given a chance to redeem herself.

The ability to sense blood enables a Slayer to sense the quality and nature of blood itself. Spending one point of Willpower, the Tsurara rolls a Perception + Blood Sense (difficulty of 6) to determine success. If the Slayer is unsuccessful, she simply can't tell anything about the subject's blood and heritage. The level of skill determines the amount of sensitivity the Rom has.

Level One: The Slayer is able to determine whether or not a given individual has Romant Blood. Additional successes enable the Slayer to determine the purity of the Blood (number of Blood Purity points). This ability can also detect a vampire who currently has Romant Blood in her veins (although she cannot necessarily tell the target is a vampire).

Level Two: The Slayer can determine if an individual is a mage. Additional successes enable the Slayer to determine the general nature of the mage's abilities.

Level Three: The sensor can determine if the subject is a vampire or werewolf. Vampires with the Obfuscate Discipline are more difficult to detect. Each level of Obfuscate increases the difficulty level by one. A Slayer attempting to sense the blood of a vampire with two levels of Obfuscate would need to roll a nine to succeed.

Level Four: Once the blood of a vampire, Rom or werewolf has been first sensed, the Slayer can "smell" the person's blood from up to one mile distant simply by concentrating on it.

Level Five: At this level the Slayer can sense a known quarry up to three miles distant. Addi-

tionally, the sensor can determine what physical state the subject is in: active, wounded, asleep, etc.

Tsurara in a Chronicle

The Tsurara are a particularly vicious, hate-mongering family of Gypsies that has quickly grown in power since Korasca destroyed his first Ravnos. Although information on the Tsurara and their special abilities is given in this book, Storytellers are advised to use the Tsurara as antagonists in Chronicles. Storytellers may even wish to prevent players from creating such characters.

In a very real sense the Slayers represent the lurking danger of the Gypsies' heritage. The Gypsies have been set apart by both their Blood and their great knowledge. In addition, they have been persecuted simply for being different and a minority, and because others recognize that they possess something the rest of the world does not. Such conditions have served to unify the Gypsies in a way that only the intimacy of a threatened minority, cast adrift on a hostile world, can do.

The Gypsies cherish their unique knowledge, heritage and abilities, protecting these from the cultural octopus that is the world of the gaje. However, in the Slayers, the power-in-self and communal identity of the Gypsies has festered and turned into a power-over mentality. Believing what the gaje fear, that any who have superior (or exclusive) access to power and knowledge will feel others inferior and worthy of abuse, the Tsurara sink into a cycle of fear and insecurity. Those having this type of mind-set constantly fear that if they are not grinding others into the dirt, thus proving their superiority by pain, they will be the ones on the bottom.

Such a mentality feeds on itself, turning all who do not fit exactly into the rigid specifications of the group into enemies to be tortured and destroyed. Soon, even those members of the group who are not of exactly the same hate-mongering mind-set and abilities (such as the other families of Rom), also become the enemy. From this cancerous cycle of pain, domination and subjugation, there is little hope for redemption.



Chapter Six: Gypsy Chronicles

*Our interest is on the dangerous edge of things
The honest thief, the tender murderer
The superstitious atheist*
—Robert Browning, "Luria"

This chapter suggests a number of themes and plots to help the Storyteller generate Gypsy-based chronicles and stories. Also described are the members of a sample kumpania, as well as some of the more important Rom vocabulary.

Sample Gypsy Stories and Chronicles

The following are ideas for possible stories or chronicles centered around Gypsy characters. Such stories are only a few of the multitude of possibilities available to a Storyteller running a Gypsy-centered Chronicle. Remember, the Gypsies

are connected to just about all the behind-the-scenes goings-on of the Gothic-Punk world, so they can be tied into any aspect of the world.

Youth on the Loose

Many Storytellers may wish to start a Gypsy chronicle with a prelude of sorts—the story of how a particular kumpania decided to get together. It is almost certain that your players will want to play Gypsies from different families. This means they youngsters are going to have to mix it up in a kumpania, since they probably would not be all together otherwise.

A story that begins at a wild, multi-family Gypsy party (and/or meeting) is a good place to introduce the characters to each other and to

some of the many facets of Gypsy culture. The Storyteller can utilize a number of tactics to spice up the kumpania's "birth."

One that works especially well is having a Romani seer foretell the future for the potential kumpania. In her reading, the Gypsy should drop a few obscure references to the Convergence, the characters' stars aligning in a sign of great importance, or some such. This will help the players and characters begin to feel that their kumpania is fated to have one of those tours that changes history (which is what most members of kumpaniya on tour feel). It is up to the Storyteller and players to decide if the seer is right.

An alternative method is to have the meeting of families raided by whatever authorities are in the area. The Gypsies' goods are confiscated and many are hauled off to jail, with the only real explanation being that they are Gypsies. When they try to help their family members, the kumpania finds itself deported or otherwise separated, and undoubtedly steamed. Storytellers who use this opening should be sure to throw in a bunch of hints about who's really behind the current persecutions (skinheads, the Technocracy, the police, another Gypsy family with a grudge against them, the Tsurara, etc.).

Children of Pain

This chronicle centers around the sudden disappearances of numerous Romani children from the Gypsy camps. Someone is taking Gypsy children — why? The characters must discover the answer. Is it Magadon, Inc., searching for more Lupine kin to pollute and control, or perhaps a group of mages bent on discovering the secret of Gypsy Blood and how it can be used to increase their own powers?

The Madman's Knife

This story centers on the hatred of the Tsurara and their leader Korasca for the Ravnos and those Gypsies who would aid them. When the kumpania travels through some urban area, a small family of Ravnos asks the characters to aid them in negotiations with the local members of the Knife Tribe. The Ravnos claim that the persecution by the Tsurara has grown so fierce that they fear for their lives whenever they go to the market. The family

is protecting one of their own, a shilmulo who has slipped into torpor after nearly being destroyed by the group of skinhead Slayers.

This story works best if at least one of the characters is of the Ravnos family, but it is workable even if this is not the case. If the characters don't agree to help their fellow Rom, the Tsurara will still turn on them for merely talking to the family. This will lead in turn to the characters' persecution by the overzealous Slayers, led by a particularly powerful young Knife Dancer or magic worker.

Bloodlust

Here the characters stumble upon a bloody scene of horror, in which a whole camp of Rom lies dead, bled dry by a vampire. A Ravnos shilmulo addicted to the Blood of the Rom sits slumped among the carnage he has wrought, holding the body of his baby sister in his arms.

This story centers on the potential for healing in all creatures. The vampire in question will beg the characters to help him rid himself of his terrible Bloodlust. It is up to the characters whether they choose to aid one who was once a Rom like themselves.

This story can be particularly effective if the vampire in question is familiar to, or even a relative of, one of the characters in the kumpania. This method can accurately evoke the pain and loss that addiction brings, both to those addicted and to their families.

The Threads Of Time

This is a particularly rare story in which the kumpania is visited by Black Ellen (see the Who's Who, below). She tells the kumpania a story of how one of the Seeds of Knowledge was endangered, and if not for the members of one brave kumpania, it would have been destroyed by the powerful vampire into whose hands it had fallen.

It turns out that the kumpania in question is the characters' very own. Black Ellen uses powers beyond the ken of other Rom to weave the threads of time around the characters, transporting them to wherever and whenever the Storyteller places the danger. This story allows the Storyteller to place his characters in a different era and involve them with one of the mythic Seeds of Knowledge.

This should get the players' attention, but such contact with the Seeds should by no means be a regular occurrence!

One Enchanted Evening

While spending time in some gaje city, the characters stop at a Gypsy tarot store and "safe house." There, they discover that the "Rom" who are running the store are not Gypsies at all, but either some form of simulacrum or gaje impersonators. The characters receive various clues as to the fates of their fellow Rom through the practice of their magic, questioning other Rom and gaje in the area, and using any other form of investigation at their disposal.

After encountering a few difficulties, the characters discover that the kidnapped Rom are being held by people who are conducting experiments on them to determine the nature of the Rom's special powers. The kidnappers are most probably Technocracy mages, but they could be Verbena mages, Tremere vampires or minions of Pentex.

In order to keep the secret of their Blood from the kidnappers, the characters will have to rescue their fellow Rom. This will undoubtedly be a tricky operation requiring stealth, conniving and all the powers of their Blood, as their opponents outclass the characters in sheer power.

Reckoning

This story requires the characters to take the part of hunters. When a coterie of (non-Ravnos) vampires shows a predilection for Romani Blood, the characters must become hunters themselves, or else be hunted down in turn. Many of the Gypsies' special gifts make them exceptional vampire hunters, but the shilmulo are always dangerous

opponents, especially gaje shilmulo who have learned how to exploit the Romani Blood in their veins.

Another twist on this storyline involves an elder Ravnos Methuselah who is beginning to awaken from a long period of torpor. In order to complete this process, the Methuselah needs the Blood of a number of Gypsies. While still slumbering, the vampire sends orders to his minions to find Gypsies and bring them to him. If the characters can't find a way to keep the Methuselah in torpor, or to destroy him, he will continue to feed off the Rom, devastating entire families to quench his thirst.

Where the Wyld Things Are

While traveling through the countryside, Black Spiral Dancers, Fomor, a ghou, a Brujah gang, or some other enemy attacks the characters. The kumpania is obviously outnumbered and seems in dire trouble. Luckily for the characters, they spy a network of caves, an abandoned gas station, or some such place where they can bulwark themselves.

When the characters reach this spot, however, they stumble onto a group of faeries conducting a rite. The faeries have just opened a gateway between Earth and the spirit world. The characters disrupt the rite and end up being transported to one of the faerie realms in the Umbra. They must now find a way to return to their world.

The realm should resemble Lewis Carroll's Wonderland, with the characters taking Alice's part. It is a bizarre realm where the normal rules of behavior do not apply, and the players must think creatively to find a way back home.



Sample Romani

Katina Turasca

Katina grew up in a kumpania traveling the American Eastern circuit, from Miami to New York. The entire Ravnos kumpania was dominated by the presence of an ancient Ravnos shilmulo. Katina's parents, grandparents and most of her aunts, uncles and older siblings were dominated and controlled by the shilmulo. Kiradin.

When Katina was only 5 years old, Kiradin accidentally killed her mother by drinking too deeply of her Blood. Since that day, three other members of the kumpania have died from Kiradin's Kiss, and Kiradin has granted the *nannumos*, the dark Embrace, to Katina's elder sister, Elyana.

Two years ago, when Katina was 15, Kiradin first fed upon her. Repulsed and yet attracted at the same time, Katina cried in her bed at the back of her father's trailer until Elyana crawled in beside her and comforted Katina. Soothing her, Elyana told Katina that she must leave the kumpania and strike out on her own, as her family was too full of the *prkaza* of the Ravnos.

"Besides," Elyana murmured, "I can already see the desire for the Embrace in your eyes, little Rabbit, and I would not see your Blood ripped from you as mine was. While you remain with the family I cannot promise that. Even I might be tempted to Embrace you, to feel your vital flood my senses."

The next morning Katina announced that she was leaving to find a tour. Although her family made a fuss over her, she could sense their relief.

For the next two years, Katina made her living playing the guitar and doing handstands on the streets of gaje cities. Occasionally she would meet other Romani, but often she found herself wandering into dark clubs reeking of shilmulo, fascinated yet terrified. Soon Katina realized that she would succumb to her fascination, would betray her Blood and search out the Embrace, if she did not do something quick. It was then that Katina decided to actually join a kumpania and go on tour.

Being on tour has temporarily distracted Katina from her strange fascination with the Kindred, but she is afraid that if she doesn't find a way to rid herself of this fascination, she will surrender to it sooner or later. Katina guards this information closely, as she is concerned that the other members of her kumpania would loathe her for her weakness.

Equipment: Guitar, light pistol, leather jacket covered in Patteran symbols, a long, barbed scarf for use as a tooth.



Sinfi

Now a ripe-old 21 years of age, Sinfi has spent most of his life exploring the undercities and sewers of America. He was born in India, but Sinfi's family left that country when he was eight, due to a disagreement between his father and Pashira, the Queen of the Banjara family. Traveling almost six years, the family finally reached London and, from there, the United States.

On their journey, Sinfi and his family stole their way through some of the great cities of the Western world. Exploring the undercities of Venice, Berlin, Paris, The Hague and more, Sinfi learned much about the ways of the underworld and of the gaje who huddled in their homes above him, burying their filth in the darkness below.

Although he spent the vast majority of his youth in the sewers, Sinfi and his family also devoted a fair amount of time to stealing from and otherwise bilking the gullible gaje of the cities. Reaching America, the family glibly continued its pattern, hitting the cities and towns that dot the shores of the Mississippi river, delving into the undercities at every opportunity.

Sinfi loved the dripping, darkened world of the sewers, and he might have stayed with his family forever, stealing from the gaje and disappearing back into his underground world. However, Sinfi's family insisted that he find a kumpania to join, for the family knew little of the ways of the American Gypsies, and his mother decided such a tour would be the best way for the family to learn. Although he squirmed at first, Sinfi finally acquiesced.

Sinfi's great joys in life revolve around finding new ways to torment and live off the American gaje. His knowledge of sewers and undercities proves remarkably handy for fast get-aways, and the other members of his kumpania have come to appreciate this. On the rare occasions Sinfi has been apprehended, he has used his innocent, wide-eyed looks and apparent honesty to devastating effect, often convincing even the man who caught him picking his pocket that he has accused the wrong boy.

Equipment: Lockpicks, variety of IDs and credit cards, Earring of Earthly Grounding, jack pack, Walkman™ and tapes.

A World of Darkness GYPSIES™

Name: Sinfi
Player:
Chronicle:

Nature: Survivor
Demeanor: *egotist*
Family: Banara

Element:
Sex: Male
Concept: Street Urchin,
Caliban

Attributes

Strength	●●●●●	Charisma	●●●●●	Perception	●●●●●
Dexterity	●●●●●	M Manipulation	●●●●●	Intelligence	●●●●●
Stamina	●●●●●	Appearance	●●●●●	Wits	●●●●●

Abilities

Talents

Acting ●●●●●
Alertness ●●●●●
Attractions ●●●●●
Brawl ●●●●●
Dodge ●●●●●
Empathy ●●●●●
Intimidation ●●●●●
Leadership ●●●●●
Streetwise ●●●●●
Subterfuge ●●●●●

Skills

Animal Ken ●●●●●
Drive ●●●●●
Etiquette ●●●●●
Firearms ●●●●●
Melee ●●●●●
Music ●●●●●
Repair ●●●●●
Security ●●●●●
Stealth ●●●●●
Survival ●●●●●

Knowledges

Bureaucracy ●●●●●
Computer ●●●●●
Finance ●●●●●
Investigation ●●●●●
Law ●●●●●
Linguistics ●●●●●
Medicine ●●●●●
Occult ●●●●●
Politics ●●●●●
Science ●●●●●

Advantages

Blood Affinities

Luck ●●●●●
Taste of the Rom ●●●●●
____ ●●●●●
____ ●●●●●
____ ●●●●●

Backgrounds

Contacts ●●●●●
Drabs ●●●●●
____ ●●●●●
____ ●●●●●
____ ●●●●●

Virtues

Conscience ●●●●●
Self-Control ●●●●●
Courage ●●●●●

Other Traits

Area Knowledge: Sewers ●●●●●
Back Pockets ●●●●●
Storytelling ●●●●●
Tact ●●●●●
____ ●●●●●

Humanity

● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●

Willpower

● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●

┘ ┘ ┘ ┘ ┘ ┘ ┘ ┘ ┘ ┘

Health

Bruised	┘
Hurt	-1 ┘
Injured	-1 ┘
Wounded	-2 ┘
Mauled	-2 ┘
Crippled	-5 ┘
Incapacitated	┘

Combat

Weapon	Difficulty	Damage

Blood Purity

✓ ✓ ┘ ┘ ┘

Experience



Sam-Sam

From the time he was a child, Sam-Sam has had a gift for manipulating electronic devices and computers. Typical of the Rom, his parents grasped the nature and direction that change would be taking, and so recognized the importance computers would soon have in the lives of the gaje. Sam-Sam's birth reading had shown that he was a child of Earth, so his parents were unsurprised by Sam-Sam's affinity for complicated devices.

They were surprised, however, when he managed to cobble together a simple piece of draba that could unlock combination locks in a mere second. The next time the family ran into a kumpania of the Phuri Dae, they gave him into their care in exchange for a number of powerful draba.

Traveling the Chicago-Washington D.C. circuit with his new family, Sam-Sam absorbed knowledge about magic and the history of the Rom. He also spent a great deal of time learning about the computers, ATMs, electronic security devices and other contraptions that were becoming more and more a part of the gaje's cultural landscape. In no time Sam-Sam had combined his magical and electronic skills to devastating effect, manipulating the information highway to funnel funds and information to Phuri Dae around the world.

Gradually, however, Sam-Sam began to feel odd about stealing from the gaje. Even if they were only a little, he knew he was hurting many of them, and unasked-for glimpses from his Sight sometimes provoked a few twinges of guilt. He was becoming bored with the ease with which he ran his scams.

Isolating his penetration of the Internet, Sam-Sam began utilizing more of his magic and draba to access highly confidential computer systems, gaining valuable information and stretching his abilities... and bringing him into contact with several Virtual Adept mages. These gaje mages amazed Sam-Sam with their abilities to manipulate the Internet and connecting computer systems. The mages warned him of other mages known as "the Technocracy," telling Sam-Sam that these mages might attempt to capture both him and his family.

Shortly after his contact with the Virtual Adepts, Sam-Sam spied someone on the net who he thought might be one of the infamous Technocracy. He believes he successfully cut all contacts with the net before the mage noticed his presence, but he is not sure.

Currently on tour with a kumpania of young Rom, Sam-Sam is attempting to learn all he can about others of his kind and about gaje mages.

Equipment: Laptop computer and modem, numerous disks, wiring kit, dark sunglasses wrapped in white silk (to use while dazing)

A World of Darkness GYPSIES™

Name: Sam-Sam

Player:

Chronicle:

Nature: Architect

Demeanor: Voluntary

Family: Phun Dae

Element: Earth

Sex: Mae

Concept: Technomancer

Attributes

Strength	●●●○○○	Charisma	●●○○○○	Perception	●●●○○○
Dexterity	●●●○○○	Manipulation	●●●○○○	Intelligence	●●●○○○
Stamina	●●●○○○	Appearance	●●○○○○	Wits	●●●○○○

Abilities

Talents

Acting	○○○○○
Alertness	○○○○○
Athletics	○○○○○
Brawl	○○○○○
Dodge	●●○○○
Empathy	●●○○○
Intimidation	○○○○○
Leadership	○○○○○
Streetwise	○○○○○
Subterfuge	●○○○○

Skills

Animal Ken	○○○○○
Drive	○○○○○
Etiquette	○○○○○
Firearms	○○○○○
Melee	○○○○○
Music	○○○○○
Repair	○○○○○
Security	●○○○○
Stealth	○○○○○
Survival	○○○○○

Knowledges

Bureaucracy	○○○○○
Computer	●●○○○
Finance	○○○○○
Investigation	○○○○○
Law	○○○○○
Linguistics	●●○○○
Medicine	○○○○○
Occult	●○○○○
Politics	○○○○○
Science	○○○○○

Advantages

Blood Affinities

Drava	●●○○○
Ecteran	●○○○○
Ine Sight	●○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○

Backgrounds

Alles	●○○○○
Contacts	●○○○○
Fame	●○○○○
Mentor	●○○○○
	○○○○○

Virtues

Conscience	●●●○○○
Self-Control	●●●○○○
Courage	●●●○○○

Other Traits

Artistic Expression	●●○○○
Fortune Telling	●●○○○
Hypnotism	●●○○○
Mag. Lore	●○○○○
Meditation	●○○○○
Religion Lore	●●○○○

Humanity

●●●●●●●●●○

Willpower

●●●●●○○○○○
□□□□□□□□□□

Health

Bruised		┘
Hurt	-1	┘
Injured	-1	□
Wounded	-2	□
Mauled	-2	┘
Crippled	-5	□
Incapacitated		□

Combat

Weapon	Difficulty	Damage

Blood Purity

✓ ✓ ✓ □ □

Experience



Clotho Fae

Named after the youngest of the fates, Clotho is a member of one of the smallest branches of the Urne family. The faerie blood sings loudly in Clotho's veins, and she has had friends among the fair folk almost since birth.

Until the last few years of her life, Clotho had an isolated existence, even for a member of the Rom. Her small family kumpania traveled up and down the Appalachian Trail, stopping at small towns and farmsteads to ply their trade as farriers and veterinarians able to cure incurable animals, and occasionally selling the odd protection device or luck-catcher.

Clotho also learned another of the family's stock-in-trades from her mother — the bujo. Offered to read the tarot cards for any gaje whom her mother thought a likely target, Clotho would usually use her skill at sensing what and where the most important thing in a person's life was (the gift of her faerie blood), while either she or her mother "found" blackened egg yolks in the farmer's hens' eggs or turned up (painted) a burnt tarot card. Clotho grew quite skilled at this art, and as she matured she grew particularly skilled at flustering male gaje and convincing her mark to part with anything and everything Clotho desired.

A few years ago, Clotho left her family's kumpania and her friends among the Appalachian faeries to go on tour with her current companions. She is always alert for signs of faerie activity and stays on good terms with most of the fey she meets.

She is particularly fond of meeting the changelings among the gaje, and she often serves as a messenger and information-barterer for the changelings in the cities the kumpania frequents. Initially, the gaje cities were a shock to Clotho's system, but she has since come to relish the increased opportunities to play with the gaje.

Clotho loves luxurious materials, wild sex, and all that is sensual in life. She often uses her innate empathy and Blood Affinities to touch other people, faeries, spirits, etc., reveling in the sensations her mind and body receive. She has learned, however, not to use her skill at Zapaderin too often in gaje clubs, for it has caused several incidents that ended in bloodshed.

Equipment: A variety of silk, velvet, leather and satin clothes, tarot cards wrapped in silk, a growing number of tattoos, and various bujo props (fake blood, burnt tarot cards, etc.).

Name: Clotho Fae
Player:
Chronicle:

Nature: Galant
Demeanor: Galant
Family: Jrme

Element:
Sex: Female
Concept: Sybarite

Attributes

Strength	●○○○○
Dexterity	●●●○○
Stamina	●●○○○

Charisma _____ ●●●○○
Manipulation _____ ●●○○○○
Appearance _____ ●●●●●

Perception _____ ●●●○○
Intelligence _____ ●●○○○
Wits _____ ●●○○○

Abilities

Talents

Acting	00000
Alertness	00000
Athletics	●●000
Brow	00000
Dodge	●●000
Empathy	●●●00
Intimidation	00000
Leadership	00000
Streetwise	00000
Subterfuge	00000

Skills

Animal Ken	00000
Drive	00000
Etiquette	00000
Firearms	00000
Melee	00000
Magic	00000
Repair	00000
Security	00000
Stealth	●●●●●
Survival	00000

Knowledges

Bureaucracy	_____	00000
Computer	_____	00000
Finance	_____	00000
Investigation	_____	00000
Law	_____	00000
Linguistics	_____	00000
Medicine	_____	00000
Occult	_____	00000
Politics	_____	00000
Science	_____	00000

Advantages

Blood Affinities

Faerie Treads	●●●●●
Thetis and	●●●●●
Zapaden	●●●●●
_____	●●●●●
_____	●●●●●

Backgrounds

Al es	●●●●●
Drava	●●●●●
	●●●●●
	●●●●●
	●●●●●

Virtues

Conscience_____●●●●○
Self-Control_____●●●●●
Courage_____●●●●○

Other Traits

Few	00000
Divers on	00000
Faerie Lore	00000
Fortune Telling	00000
Magus Lore	00000
Snake Lore	00000
Seadragon	00000
Spirit Lore	00000
	00000
	00000
	00000

Humanity

●●●●●●●●○

Health

Bruised		1
Hurt	-1	1
Injured	-1	1
Wounded	-2	1
Mauled	-2	1
Crippled	-5	1
Incapacitated		1

Willpower

Blood Purity

☒ ☒ ☒ ☐ ☐

Experience

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Who's Who Among the Rom

The following Gypsies are some of the more prominent traveling through today's Gothic-Punk world. Most of these Gypsies are known at least within their own family, while a few are familiar to almost all the Rom.

Black Ellen

Black Ellen is a female Gypsy of indeterminate years. She has slanted eyes that have been described as echoing every color in the rainbow, and her skin is dark, even for a Gypsy. She always appears among her fellow Rom in traditional Gypsy skirts, bangles and scarves, although no Rom can remember seeing her wear shoes.

Black Ellen is the consummate storyteller. Outside of the legendary mother Daenna, she is the most famous teller of tales among the Rom. Her stories are so fascinating and clever that she has been known to keep whole families of Rom in rapt attention for periods of up to two nights and two days.

However, Black Ellen is notoriously sensitive about her stories, and if she catches even one member of her audience not paying attention, she will leave off the story, never to finish it again for that family or kumpania. One of her most famous tactics is to suddenly speak the word *prala*, or brother, and if her listeners do not immediately respond *pena*, or sister, she will cease her tale.

Nothing much is known of Black Ellen's history or current life. Black Ellen does not travel with any particular kumpania or family, although most believe her to be a member of the Phuri Dae.

Black Ellen has been traveling for at least the past 40 years, although she was described as a woman of indeterminate years even then. There are those who suggest that if she is not Daenna herself, Black Ellen may have managed to learn to travel the threads of time. If so, she could be sliding through time, dropping in on her fellow Rom when she feels the need for company or to try out some newly collected tale.

Her goals are by no means clear, although she has been known to suddenly appear among the dirt

bikes and trailers of a small kumpania on tour, only to tell them a tale that, at the time, seems strange and nonsensical, but which aids them at some later time. This sort of behavior leads many of the Phuri Dae to speculate that Black Ellen is attempting to test and groom certain younger Rom for their role(s) in the nearing Convergence. But what role she sees the Gypsies playing is anyone's guess.

Korasca

The driving force behind the Tsurara family, Korasca has turned the hate, pain and fear he experienced during the Holocaust into a ladder with which to elevate himself to the vaulted heights of righteousness. Although the scope of his hatred is broad, he particularly directs his Slayers to punish the "traitors to the Blood." This definition tends to encompass whoever disagrees with Korasca, but he mostly targets the Raynos shilmulo (with the humans of the clan not far behind), and any Gypsy who has sex with a gaje and thus pollutes the Blood.

Although many Gypsies outside the Tsurara shake their heads at the irony of the reality Korasca has created for himself, he is incapable of seeing the terrible parallels between himself and the Nazis who murdered his people and took away his youth.

In recent years Korasca's tactics have grown more severe, and he has begun to actively recruit young Gypsies from other families. Once they complete the Tsurara's harrowing initiation rites, which all would-be adult Slayers must experience, Korasca rewards his soldiers of the Blood with opportunities for bloodshed and pain, all the while whispering to his family that they are the only ones capable of understanding. "You are the chosen of Time," he murmurs, "and their pathetic jealousy would keep you in chains!"

Korasca's life of hatred has begun to wear on even his strong body and obsessed mind. For years he has experimented with drugs to push his body and mind to new heights, but such abuse takes its toll. Therefore, Korasca has turned in the last year to drinking the blood of the vampires he kills. He justifies this tactic to himself by claiming that his Rom Blood is stronger than any parasite's, and that he must be alive for the Convergence so that he might take his rightful place of honor in the Romani world to come.

Despite these feelings, Korasca has not told anyone of his new addiction, since he has condemned members

of his own family to death for less. But sooner or later his newfound strength and vitality will begin to look strange, even to his fanatic followers

Pashira

Pashira is the Queen of the Banjara, the Romani family centered in the undercities and ruins of India. Pashira is a shrewd, proud and ruthless woman in her late 50s. She controls many of the beggars in India and she is the head of a solid information network consisting of her beggars, other Gypsy operatives who serve as cleaning crews and repairmen to gain access to government buildings, a few Ravnos and Nosferatu shilmulo, a mage and numerous spirits

She also gathers information from a select number of hand-picked ghouls whose vampiric masters were destroyed, leaving them bereft of their needed supply of vitae. Pashira keeps a certain amount of such blood on hand, the better to bribe her pet gaje ghouls

Due to her powerful information network, Pashira knows much of the behind-the-scenes dealings occurring between all parties with active interests in India. She has certain access to information regarding other countries, but that is limited. Pashira herself has not traveled outside of India for the past 20 years or more, and she cares little about the politics of other countries

Pashira's main concern is finding one or more of the Seeds of Knowledge. She is particularly interested in locating the whereabouts of Bonnerim, the Seed of the Balanced Scale. It is only in the past few decades that the Banjara have lost their status as a family of power. Until then, the family had been considered one of the hereditary Guardians of the Seeds for the past six centuries or more

Pashira is very bitter about this supposed loss in status and insists that a member of the Banjara family actually still guards one of the Seeds, but she has no proof of this whatsoever. Pashira spends much of her time and considerable energy on her search for the Seeds, sending various kumpaniyi on missions all over the globe and making certain that the young Banjara on tour know to gather any and all information on the possible whereabouts of the Seeds

Pashira's secondary fear is of a group of vampires called the Black Hand. She knows this ancient sect has some special interest in India, and has lost operatives to these Kindred. She believes they may be interested in the Seeds of Knowledge



Pashira hates all Tsurara and is actively feuding with Korasca. The two loathe each other, but Pashira's hate is perhaps the more active, as Korasca's upstart family currently has the upper hand. Pashira allows no known members of the Knife Tribe to pass through her cities or rest at any of the numerous Gypsy safe houses in India. No Banjara kumpania in India will shelter a known Slayer. In fact, Pashira brands the left hand of any Slayers who are found in India, so that they can be more easily spotted and driven out.

Pashira allows members of other families free movement in her lands, encouraging young Banjara to tour with members of other families, and aiding other Rom against the gaje. Only the Tsurara bear the brunt of her rage.

Peddlequick

Peddlequick is a powerful Urme Gypsy who wanders throughout Europe and the Americas. Peddlequick is infinitely fond of riddles and puzzles, challenging all Rom he meets to a contest of wits. He appears as a rather bandy-legged, red-headed man in his early 30s. Surprisingly, Peddlequick is always dressed in the trendiest youth fashions and often appears in clubs, bars, and other such establishments.

No one knows which branch of the Urmen Peddlequick descends from, but many believe he belongs to one of the families that have disappeared into the Arcadian realm. This might explain both Peddlequick's lone travels and his fits of distraction, during which he stares catatonically off into space for minutes or even hours at a time. Some Romani suggest that while Peddlequick is zoning out, he is actually off to faerie land, but he may just have a problem.

Peddlequick has been known to offer very powerful draba to various kumpaniyi in exchange for "a little favor." Unfortunately, such favors tend to be vastly more complicated than they at first seem. Receiving a package ends up involving the couriers in a dispute with the vampires of the Camarilla; delivering a present to a particular gaje brings the Rom into a full-scale drug war.

As long as the kumpania successfully handles whatever situation Peddlequick's "favor" results in, he always finds the group and gives them the promised reward. No one is sure what Peddlequick's plans are actually about, and so far he has declined to explain them.

Balika Loupyn

Balika is the leader of a large kumpania of Lupine Gypsies. The kumpania travels much of the American South, performing as the Cirque de Loupyn. It is a small circus with a number of aerialists, contortionists and a unique wolf-taming act. The wolves are, of course, also members of the Loupyn family. Although a few werewolves do travel with the circus, the majority of its members are merely kinfolk of the Garou.

Balika's branch of the Lupine family is a powerful one, and she has proclaimed herself Queen of the American Children of Sarrath. However, Rune Batresmith, another Lupine Romani, has proclaimed himself King. The two are in the midst of an intense rivalry, with each trying to prove to the rest of the family that he/she deserves to be the family's undisputed leader.

This cold war has been going on for over five years and Balika has recently begun to actively recruit not only Silent Striders, but other members of the Garou. She hopes that their support, if gained, will prove her power to her family and thus encourage the American Children of Sarrath to crown Balika their undisputed Queen. Balika has had some success so far with a few tribes of Uktena and Bone Gnawers, but has otherwise met with indifference or worse. Balika's latest tactic has been to step up her family's search for any lost children of the Garou. Many gaje come to the Cirque de Loupyn to watch the acts, but they almost never realize that they, too, are being watched.

Balika is a striking woman with classic Romani features, dark hair and large, black eyes. She is in her mid-30s but still able to perform as a contortionist in her circus. Balika is furious with Rune for defying her authority, viewing him as a ridiculous, overblown pretender to her rightful throne. Whenever the two families pass through the same city, Balika does everything in her power to get the gaje police to pick up, question, or otherwise harass Rune and his family.

Several cities have had their emergency lines flooded with calls claiming that Rune has stolen cars, deals drugs, is on the FBI's most-wanted list, etc. Balika and her family never show up for more than preliminary procedures, but being searched or arrested certainly makes Rune uncomfortable.

Rune Batresmith

Rune Batresmith is a member of the Lupine family and the other contender for their American throne. The self-proclaimed American King of the Rom (Rune often overstates his case) and his family travel a long circuit stretching from Los Angeles to Miami. Rune enjoys being treated like a king, and he rules his immediate family, including all eighteen of his children, with an iron fist.

Rune is particularly skilled at gambling, and his family gambles (legally and illegally) its way across the country. Meanwhile, the younger members of the family gather additional income by picking the pockets of gaje. Rune also serves as a liaison between certain vampires (including Gangrels and anarchs) who reside in many of the cities and some of the countryside his family moves through and the Garou who roam that countryside. Rune has set up a nice business for himself, escorting shilmulo through Garou territory. Although this strains his relationship with the Garou, who know of his activities, they have, so far, left him alone.

Rune claims that he should be the uncontested American King of the Rom because of his audacity and cleverness at dealing with gaje, vampires and werewolves. He also alleges to be following in the footsteps of Daenna by dealing with both Garou and shilmulo. Many Romani are impressed with Rune's brazenness, but they are waiting to see if he can solidify his position with the disparate forces he manipulates before committing themselves to Rune's cause.

Rune is in his early 40s. He is a powerfully built man who is handsome, although his features are somewhat blurred from a variety of overindulgences, including wine, food and sex. Rune thinks his rival, Balika, is not daring enough to win their contest, although he has been growing more and more annoyed with her use of the gaje police. More than once, they have come close to actually finding incriminating evidence against Rune, and he has no intent to spend more than a few days or weeks in a gaje prison.

Seth Browne

Seth is an American Gypsy adopted and raised by an American middle-class family. Completely oblivious to his heritage and Blood, Seth's gaje parents managed not to neglect or abuse him too

much, and he had a pretty happy childhood. However, from the time he was small, Seth was obsessed with fantasy and science fiction, reading and watching everything he could get his hands on. His adopted parents thought his hobby odd, but not particularly dangerous, especially compared to a lot of the things they read about.

By the time he was 15, he was hanging out with a bunch of sci-fi and fantasy fans. He attended conventions and meetings of all types, but particularly those that emphasized the supernatural. Werewolves were Seth's particular favorites, and he would spend hours reading books and watching movies on the creatures. When he found out about the games people played, where you could actually pretend you were such a creature, Seth was in seventh heaven. He began playing such games any time he could, and he also began writing scripts and screenplays for dramas of his own.

One day he shyly showed his work to the people who put on some of his favorite games. To his delighted surprise, they seemed very impressed, even calling over an older woman whom he had never seen before. The woman, Star, looked startled when she shook his hand, but then she handed him a brand-new, unpublished game and asked for his opinion. Seth practically flew up to his hotel room to read the material, which told of vampires and werewolves and all sorts of other beasts that everyone thought were fiction, but only because they wanted it that way.

That night Star and the others had a long talk with Seth, and his world suddenly made a whole lot more sense.

Seth is now a 20-year old author who just published his first book, *Scent of the Blood*, about a young man who finds he is kin to werewolf warriors. Seth now knows many of the secrets of his people, the Lupine Gypsies, and he learns more from his mentor, Star, every day.

Although he is of the Phuri Dae family, Seth is eager to search out others like himself, Rom or gaje, who might be willing to accept the world behind the scientific facade. Seth is not nearly as prejudiced against the gaje as most of his people, having grown up among them. He firmly believes that a conspiracy of growing truth among the Rom and any gaje who show an inclination toward belief will only aid in the time of the Convergence.

A World of Darkness GYPSIES™

Name:
Player:
Chronicle:

Nature:
Demeanor:
Family:

Element:
Sex:
Concept:

Attributes

Strength	●0000	Charisma	●0000	Perception	●0000
Dexterity	●0000	Manipulation	●0000	Intelligence	●0000
Stamina	●0000	Appearance	●0000	Wits	●0000

Abilities

Talents

Acting	00000
Alertness	00000
Athletics	00000
Brawl	00000
Dodge	00000
Empathy	00000
Intimidation	00000
Leadership	00000
Streetwise	00000
Subterfuge	00000

Skills

Animal Ken	00000
Drive	00000
Etiquette	00000
Firearms	00000
Melee	00000
Music	00000
Repair	00000
Security	00000
Stealth	00000
Survival	00000

Knowledges

Bureaucracy	00000
Computer	00000
Finance	00000
Investigation	00000
Law	00000
Linguistics	00000
Medicine	00000
Occult	00000
Politics	00000
Science	00000

Advantages

Blood Affinities

_____	00000
_____	00000
_____	00000
_____	00000
_____	00000

Backgrounds

_____	00000
_____	00000
_____	00000
_____	00000
_____	00000

Virtues

Conscience	●00000
Self-Control	●00000
Courage	●00000

Other Traits

_____	00000
_____	00000
_____	00000
_____	00000
_____	00000

Humanity

0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

Willpower

0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Health

Bruised		<input type="checkbox"/>
Hurt	-1	<input type="checkbox"/>
Injured	-1	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wounded	-2	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mauled	-2	<input type="checkbox"/>
Crippled	-5	<input type="checkbox"/>
Incapacitated		<input type="checkbox"/>

Combat

Weapon	Difficulty	Damage

Blood Purity

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Experience

Gypsies

From Lands Unknown

The supernatural creatures of the World of Darkness tend to think of humans as little more than animals, ignorant of what really goes on in the shadows around them. The Gypsies think this of the supernaturals. The Gypsies have seen things which would turn a werewolf's fur white and make a vampire's fangs fall out.

To Times Undreamed of

They've had dealings with all the supernatural creatures, from the vampires in their fortress cities to the wraiths in the shadows and from the werewolves of the wild to the mages in their libraries. They know the time of reckoning is coming — and they're ready.

A World of Darkness: Gypsies includes:

- Details on the Romani families of power who have traveled the Earth for millennia;
- Information on the role these nomads have played and continue to play in the World of Darkness; and
- Rules to create Gypsy characters, the special powers they have used throughout history and ways to use them in chronicles.

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